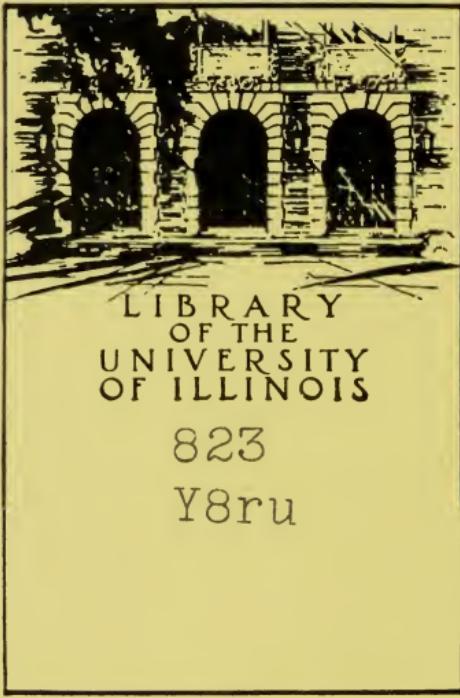


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THE RUGGED
DE ST LO

CHARLOTTE M.
YONGE



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THE RUBIES OF ST. LO



The Rubies of St. Lo

BY

CHARLOTTE M. YONGE

AUTHOR OF 'THE HEIR OF REDCLYFFE,' ETC.

London
MACMILLAN AND CO.
AND NEW YORK
1894

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PREFACE

It may be interesting to know that a necklace exists, in which every ancestress appears in her portrait for several generations. Then it was lost, but found at last by a young bride, in a secret cupboard in the wainscot, brought to light by the village carpenter.

C. M. YONGE.

George Ray 25 Oct 57 mounted



CHAPTER I

‘THE MANOR, NORTHAM, ST. LO,
‘10th October 1889.

‘MY DEAR MADAM—I am desirous of making acquaintance with some of your family, and should be much obliged if you would entrust your eldest daughter to me for a visit of some duration. If it would be convenient to send her on Tuesday, the 17th, by the train leaving Wallbridge at 10.50, she would reach the Euston Station at 2.15, where my maid would meet her, and bring her to the Northam Station at 5.10. Allow me to enclose a note for travelling and other expenses.—I remain, etc.,

‘T. E. F. ST. LO.’

This was the letter that produced great agitation in a little parlour in a

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dull, deserted-looking, but rather ‘gentle’ street in a small country town. There was a white-faced girl of fourteen lying on a couch ; a tall, rosy, lively, long-haired creature of twelve, in short petticoats, dangling her hat ; an elder one of about nineteen standing by the window, with a thoughtful expression on her somewhat grave, well-moulded face ; and, in a chair by the couch, the mother, with a thin face, sometimes looking quite young, sometimes prematurely old, and bearing traces of care, ill-health, and climate.

‘Twenty pounds ! Oh, dear !’ she cried, as she unfolded the note.

‘It’s like buying me,’ said the girl in question.

‘Nonsense, Theresa ! It is her kindness,’ said the mother. ‘You will be late for school, Cora. Run away !’

‘Horrid !’ returned Cora. ‘But Katie will tell me all about it, that’s one comfort.’

‘I suppose I am purchased,’ sighed Theresa.

‘Do you really think so ?’ said Katie, with her eyes swimming in tears.

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'I hope she will be liberal,' said the mother. 'This looks like it.'

'Oh, if she would only send Cora to a real good school, and give Katie a donkey-chair!' cried Theresa.

'I don't care for the donkey-chair without you, Terry,' said Katie, fretfully.

'We might have a few drives now, out of my money for lessons,' said Theresa, 'with all this in hand. Oh! would it be honest, I wonder, for Cora to have a new frock?'

'Miss St. Lo would never ask how you spent it,' said the mother, 'if you came with a proper outfit.'

'But would it be fair?' said Theresa.

'I'm sure you wouldn't wish to be selfish, my dear,' said Mrs. St. Lo, a little American twang becoming more apparent.

'I don't mean to be selfish! Oh no, no, mamma; but I must be honest.'

'Why don't you send it back at once?' cried Kate, energetically, 'and say you don't want her money, and won't be like the poor companions in books, worse than slaves.'

'No, no,' said the mother, 'that would

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not do, Katie. A great deal may depend on not offending Miss St. Lo.'

'What makes her take us up now,' demanded Katie, 'after all these years, and when you never asked her for anything? You haven't, mother?'

'No, certainly not!' was the reply. 'I don't know why she begins now, though indeed any opening for Theresa is acceptable, since things have gone so badly with us.'

'I think I can guess,' said Theresa; 'there was a lady staying at Mrs. Carter's when I was teaching her little boys. She was struck by my name, and asked whether we were related to old Sir Roland St. Lo of Northam, and said she knew Miss St. Lo, and the Manor, which, she said, was a most curious old place. She was very kind and friendly, and seemed interested about us. I think she must have told Miss St. Lo.'

'If Miss St. Lo chooses to ask you, you cannot decline,' said the mother. 'Relations as we are, we cannot refuse, and who knows what may not be the consequence? Your poor father was the only one of the same name! I really

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don't know whether he might not have been Sir Henry himself, or your poor little brothers.'

It was true that Mrs. St. Lo's husband had belonged to a distant branch of the same family—a very old Norman race. Henry St. Lo had been the only son of a very poor curate, and had struggled into employment as an engineer, employed by a company which undertook works in various parts of the world. He had been married to an American lady at Rio de Janeiro, and his children had been born and died in many distant regions, before he was recalled to fill a good appointment at Wallbridge, but he had not been there for many months before he met his death by an accident. Only the three girls survived, and poor Katharine had become a permanent invalid from injury to the spine in a fall through a hatchway on the homeward voyage. During the father's lifetime the family had been in comfortable circumstances, and he had invested his savings in shares in the Company. A sum of money had likewise been awarded in compensation to the widow, and this she had likewise

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placed in the same investment, but in the five years which had since ensued, the affairs of the Company had become much less prosperous. Mrs. St. Lo had sold out in time to prevent utter loss and destitution, but she was very much impoverished. She had left her New England home very young, and knew of no living connections there, nor had she the means to return, so she continued to live at Wallbridge within reach of the few friends who had become interested in her. As the difficulties increased, Theresa, who was a determined and sensible girl, felt that she must do something to eke out the family means, though her education had been too desultory and imperfect to bring her up to modern requirements as a teacher. She had, however, found employment for the last two years as daily governess to very small children. The setting up of a Kindergarten threatened to deprive her of this resource, and she was endeavouring to save enough to obtain lessons in the system so as to enable her to become an assistant, when this letter from Miss St. Lo arrived.

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To poor Katie it was a great blow. Theresa's leisure hours were her happy ones, and for her sake her sister would almost have refused the invitation, but that it would have been folly to decline an advance in utter ignorance of how much it meant ; and if the rich relation intended to put any opportunities of earning a livelihood in her way, it was not right to reject them, if only for the sake of enabling little Cora to obtain a superior education.

So a letter of acceptance was written, and Theresa spent her own scanty earnings in brightening Cora's wardrobe, and adding to Kate's small library, though her conscience still would not allow her to spend Miss St. Lo's remittance otherwise than as it was designed.

' But,' said she, ' I have nearly five pounds still left after the journey. If she is nice, perhaps I can ask her to let me send it home.'

' And if she is horrid ? ' said Cora.

' If she is horrid, she won't like me, and I shall get home again.'

' I know she'll be a horrid old frump, and will like you and keep you, and

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make you a slave and a *souffre douleur*,' groaned Katie, 'and that will be worst of all!'

'And,' said her mother, 'don't you be going and upsetting everything with your absurd outspoken ways.'

'I am not going to toady and be false,' said Theresa.

'As if I asked you to be!' said Mrs. St. Lo. 'Only to be a little rational and prudent. You might be getting thirty pounds a year *now* from Mrs. Long if you hadn't gone and told her her children were odious little monkeys.'

'No, no, mamma, that was not what I said. I told her they were undisciplined and mischievous, and needed a firm hand; and that was true!'

'But you need not have told her so. Then you must needs tell Mrs. Brown that though you could speak French, you don't know it grammatically. As if she would find out!'

'So much the more reason to be honest with her.'

'And then you thought proper to tell Mrs. Carter, who really liked you and would have kept you on, that Jemmy

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had no ear, and you did not know Latin so as to prepare him for school.'

'Well, I didn't.'

'Then you chose to affront Mrs. Tozer by telling her that her screens were in bad taste.'

'They were hideous, and when she asked me to admire those broken-necked storks, what could I say?'

'Well, I only know if you go on cutting your own throat in that way, I don't see what is to become of us!'





CHAPTER II

‘To help mother and Kate and Cora! Oh, may I recollect it if she is old and tiresome! Keep me good and patient, and true and faithful!’ That was Theresa’s unuttered prayer all through the journey.

A pleasant, civil, elderly maid met her at the London station; rather a needless precaution, she said to herself, for one who had seen so much of the world in all sorts of conveyances. Yet it was comfortable to be looked after; to have no jostling and providing for herself, since there was no Katie to be helped, and when she found herself in a first-class carriage, she felt, in her sleepiness, as if she were dreaming.

It was still light when she reached the

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little Northam station, where a brougham was waiting; and thence the drive through a land of meadows was not long to an arched gateway. Theresa was surprised to find how near the road the Manor House lay, only separated from it by a very short double avenue of elms, where the rooks were cawing so vehemently as to overcome the sound of the wheels. She could only for a moment see the long flat outline of the front of the house, before the carriage had stopped at a deep porch, whence in the deepening twilight there issued a flood of light, and in another moment her hand was in a warm clasp, a kiss was on her cheek, and with some kind words about her being cold, she was led into a long, low room glowing with a bright fire, and with a shaded lamp.

It was not what she had expected. Miss St. Lo was not an infirm old passive lady in the chimney-corner, but slim and active, with a quick, ready step, and lively eyes; and there was a girl in the room of about her own age, who was named to her as ‘your cousin, Alice Tresham,’ and who kissed her,

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while Miss St. Lo went on : ‘ You are Theresa, are you not ? —our old family name.’

Presently they took her up a very slippery stair to a room which seemed to her wonderfully delightful and luxurious —all brown wainscot around, reflecting the glow of the fire in every panel, and with comfortable snug crimson draperies, and chair and little round table by the fire.

She cried out with delight, and then thought of the contrast with poor Katie’s bare, shabby chamber, where, however, they had been very happy and merry together. Perhaps Alice Tresham divined that the place would feel lonely, for she said : ‘ I am close by. See, all the rooms open one into the other in this funny old house. Here is mine. You may lock me out if you please.’

She unlocked a brown door, which led to another through the thick partition, opening into just such another little bedroom, only blue as to the furniture instead of crimson, and of course with more tokens of habitation.

‘ This is always my room when I am here,’ said Alice. ‘ I keep some of my

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things here, my drawing, and some of my books, which I never have time for at home. Come and call me if you want anything ; and shall I come and fetch you when it is time to go down ? Oh ! by the bye, the post won't go for an hour, if you like to send a card to say you are safe.'

Theresa did like, and longed to add, 'All so kind,' but felt too shy to do so openly, and besides, it looked like, to her mind, trying to recommend herself.

All the evening she was more and more convinced that it would be a kind, considerate house, though there was a mixture of simple habits and high-bred customs that somewhat astonished and sometimes puzzled her. There was the 'high tea,' evidently after an early dinner, which people at Wallbridge thought an utter token of inferiority, and yet there was the butler waiting, and there were the little observances, the multiplicity of appliances which Theresa had heard of, or seen from a respectful distance, but which here were matters of course and daily life.

She found out gradually that Alice

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was the daughter of Miss St. Lo's only sister, and the eldest daughter of a large family, much wanted at home.

When they went into the drawing-room, Miss St. Lo said :—

‘Now, my dear, you will see how we spend our quiet evenings, and how Alice is eyes to me. You must be tired —so! ’

And she deposited Theresa in a low easy-chair, in spite of some slight remonstrance about work, and settled herself with some knitting, while Alice went to the piano, and played and sang with evidently much good understanding and taste for half an hour, when she came back to the table, took her place where the lamp shade permitted light, and Theresa was asked whether she had read the book in hand, a number of the *Quarterly*. Of course she had not, and, declaring herself rested, she was allowed to take up her work, and Alice read till a big bell sounded, and they all rose up. In the hall Alice put a knitted shawl round her aunt, and another on Theresa, saying, ‘Yes, it is cold, but so nice’; and presently they were in a little

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old oratory, all dark, carved wood like the rest, but with a coloured glass window which looked strange and mysterious between the lights within and the rising moon outside. Here men and maids were drawn up, and Miss St. Lo read prayers. Somehow there was something in the chill, the quiet, the solemnity of the place which impressed the stranger more than all the rest with a feeling partly of something weird and strange, partly of peace and soothing, and she felt far less on the defensive or offensive than she had expected. Her outlook in the morning was over a balustrade into a little quadrangle with a paved path round it, and turf within, a big, old-fashioned well in the centre. It was earlier than she had expected grandes to get up, but having been forewarned, besides having a card of household hours on her mantelpiece, she was quite ready, in her new blue serge, by the time the great clock chimed, the big bell began to ring, and Alice knocked to escort her down again to the chapel.

Things revealed themselves to her, she hardly knew how. Miss St. Lo and

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her younger sister were the co-heiresses of the Northam Manor estate, but Mrs. Tresham had been for many years the wife of a clergyman, now an Archdeacon, while Miss St. Lo had watched over her father, who had lived to a great age. Since his death she had continued to reign over the estate, being in fact, by his will, much in the position of an eldest son, though it was understood that on her death the property would pass to her nephew, Roland Tresham, a young man two years older than Alice, and now at Aldershot with his regiment.

There were four younger ones in the family, and as ‘Aunt Terry’s’ eyes had of late been failing her, though they were still so bright and lively, Alice had been much with her. Now, however, the Archdeacon was going into residence at the cathedral town, and her mother could not dispense with the help of her ‘come out’ daughter in the chapter society. So Alice was recalled, and her brother was coming in a few days’ time to escort her home. It was, as Theresa had guessed, from the mention of the visitor at Wallbridge that Miss St. Lo

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had become fully aware of the circumstances of the family of Henry St. Lo. She remembered that her father had spoken of his existence, and of having heard from him some years previously, but Sir Roland had then been very infirm, with frequent lapses of memory, and she did not know whether the letter had been answered. She had felt it her duty to take some notice of these relations, and to see whether Theresa, described as a nice, good girl, could take Alice's place.





CHAPTER III

THE two girls, Alice and Theresa, soon had a cousin-like feeling of friendship, and the former had made known to the other that the pity of one's life was that one couldn't be in two places at once, or at least move about like Beauty, unconsciously, in the night.

'It's horrid to leave Aunt Terry, and it is horrid to go away from home!' she said. 'I know mother does want me so, and *will* do too much without me.'

'And if I could but fly home and cheer up Katie,' responded Theresa, 'and see that Cora does her exercises.'

Then they confided to each other the descriptions of their younger sisters, ending with Theresa's consulting Alice whether Miss St. Lo would 'mind' her

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bestowing the remainder of the sum sent for her outfit on Cora's needful music lessons and Katie's drives.

'I am sure she would not,' said Alice.

'Only it does not seem fair without her knowing,' said Theresa; 'and I can't bear asking her, it seems so like begging.'

'I'll tell her, if you do not like to do so,' said Alice. 'How much is it?'

So kindly was it said that it checked the 'I'd rather manage for myself.'

'Four pounds eighteen. I had terribly much to get, and things do run up so,' said Theresa, apologetically.

'And you have made yourself look so nice on fifteen pounds!' exclaimed the Archdeacon's daughter. 'Well!'

Just then in came Miss St. Lo, equipped for the village, in a big straw hat, and basket on arm.

'Suppose you take Theresa round the house and garden, my dear,' she said; 'there will be just time for her to learn her way about before service. She will think she never saw such an odd old place.'

'No, indeed; nor such a dear one!' said Alice. 'Church is at eleven on

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Wednesdays and Fridays, so we have plenty of time.'

Alice, by some practice in visitors, had arrived at judging of their good taste, intelligence, or antiquarianism by the way in which they looked at the Manor, and she soon saw that, though Theresa had none of the last, she had plenty of the two former, and was thoroughly interested and comprehending.

It was really a very curious remnant of the old mansion, capable of defence, and, though altered and modified, the main features were still traceable. The gateway through which Theresa had entered was in a wall thick and deep enough to hold a little porter's lodge, wherein dwelt a superannuated house-maid, just capable of attending to the gate. On either side, enclosing the grounds, was a stout wall of gray stone. There had been a moat, but this had disappeared, except on the side given up to the stable-yard. The other two sides contained, between them and the house, walled gardens, each partitioned off—one kitchen, the other pleasure-ground, with a sunny lawn, where the trees were

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slowly dropping golden leaves, and rows of chrysanthemums in pots were blossoming. A little church, with a deep-tiled roof, taller than its walls, and a squat tower, was in mediæval fashion close by, and the wall towards it was much lower than the rest, admitting southern sunshine freely to the sitting-rooms, whose large sash windows and one glass door, in defiance of all architecture, looked out on it, protected from blasts by the creeper-covered divisions between it and the other court-like gardens. The fourth side was the entrance, and had a paddock, where a pony was turned out.

‘Yes,’ said Alice, looking at the windows and their sunshine, ‘putting them in was spoiling a good deal of antiquity; very naughty in my grandmother, I suppose; but it is all the pleasanter to live in.’

‘The house is low in proportion to the height,’ said Theresa.

‘That is because it is built round a court,’ said Alice, ‘like old colleges.’

‘I see. The convent I went to school at for a little while in Belgium had a quadrangle like that, with a cloister round.’

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‘Exactly; it is the old way. Most of the available windows and doors used to be into the court. There’—as Alice led her through a passage out into the green court—‘you see both the staircases were in the open air, going up to that gallery, which runs round two sides. That one, with only one door and a window or two, belongs to the stables, and the men don’t come in that way; the other is where the kitchen and offices are.’

‘We didn’t go up that outside stair last night.’

‘No; the family constitutions have grown too delicate; so one of the great-grandmothers put up one stair in the hall, and another at the kitchen end, and cut off a passage between the bedrooms and the front of the house, so that it might not be necessary to pass through other people’s rooms or out on the gallery. How jolly and fresh it must have been to come down to breakfast out of doors! By the bye, Theresa, don’t you ever be betrayed into saying “awfully jolly!”’

‘I don’t often say it,’ said Theresa, smiling. ‘And somehow it seems as if

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one ought to talk Chaucer's, or at least Queen Elizabeth's, language, in a place like this.'

'That's right, fair damsel! Of your courtesy, let me lead you to the kitchen to behold the resort of the *meiné*.'

The kitchen was a grand old place, with mullioned windows, black oak, shining tables and settles, a huge open fireplace, and a curious apparatus with a wheel for an unfortunate turnspit dog. Altogether, it was too big and too inconvenient to be more than a show-place, where the servants dined in the summer when it was not too draughty, or for Christmas suppers. The real household operations had unseen offices of their own in the rear—not too old to be of use, as Alice said.

'I suppose one could not live in Pompeii if it had not been buried?'

'Oh no, those old towns do get so unwholesome.'

'And machinery spoils one. See'—as they emerged into the turfed court—'this old well might help us to stand a siege, and the windlass is a real treasure to sketch, but as to drawing up a bucket

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in these days, the men would as soon think of drawing a waggon single-handed. Now for the hall. That, I fancy, is as unchanged in the main as the kitchen, except for the staircase.'

It was a fine architectural hall, with shields in the windows, an open roof, and a handsome carved gallery, whence came down the slippery staircase. It was hung with Spanish leather, representing in shaded figures the battle of Roncevalles, and the earlier achievements of Roland, apparently in compliment to the family name. The other tapestry only survived in one bedroom, having apparently been made away with when the house was wainscotted. The hall did not extend the full length of its own side of the quadrangle, the chapel was partitioned off at one end, and at the other was a library, a corner room, with one window to the garden, another to the front, and here Miss St. Lo generally sat in the morning.

There seemed to be an infinite number of upstair rooms, not all entirely furnished, some modernised for present needs, some left to what suited the

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notions of comfort of former centuries, some with doors opening to the stone outside gallery, some only communicating with the passage or with each other.

‘I fancy there are all sorts of secret passages and stairs if one could only find them,’ said Alice. ‘Roland and I have hunted about everywhere, but we never got to anything better than the other side of a housemaid’s closet. And there’s the bell!’





CHAPTER IV

THERE was business and letter-writing on all hands till the luncheon, or rather early dinner, and then, as Theresa sat looking up to the pictures opposite to her, she beheld a long line of ancestors carefully ranged in pairs, chronologically, and with their names and dates in yellow letters on their corners, and the shield, a white field with a sable bend, and on a lesser shield (a scutcheon of pretence) a tiny eight-pointed cross.

There were the stiff couple in one picture, wooden in looks as in material, even their ruffs looking as if cut out of metal, *he* in a hard black beard, *she* in a cast-iron cap, not allowing a lock of hair to be visible, their leathern hands locked together—‘very ugly,’ as Theresa said.

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Then came the puffed and bejewelled man, with a lofty ruff, and tiny cap with curling feather, and in a separate frame, for, indeed, her farthingale would have left no room for him, his wife overshadowed with tall butterfly-like lace on head and neck. A gray beard in a dis- guising extinguisher of a black hat, and a lady in a yellow ruff, preceded a really fine portrait, either by Vandyke or in his style, of the graceful Cavalier and his dame in full costume, followed by the same, exaggerated on the man's part into the wig and lace cravat, while the lady's garb was of the scanty Lely-like kind, quite shocking Theresa ; but her successor, to make up for it, was in the overwhelming head-dress of the eighteenth century, stately and imposing, but scarcely beau- tiful, powder, patch, and all. But Theresa there saw both her relatives looking at her to see whether she remarked something.

‘What is it?’ she said. ‘Ah, I see ! this next powdery one hasn't got a necklace like the others with that square-looking cross.’

Alice clapped her hands and exclaimed with delight ; Miss St. Lo smiled.

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‘No, nor the next, that very pretty one with the dear little curly boy on her lap, reaching to the dog.’

‘Reynolds,’ put in Miss St. Lo.

‘Nor this one, smiling under her great hat, nor——’

‘No, nor my grandmother,’ said Alice. ‘No lady since Queen Anne’s Dame Theresa!’

‘And such a beauty, as it seems to be,’ said Theresa. ‘Are those meant for rubies?’

‘You insult them,’ cried Alice.

‘I haven’t much experience in rubies,’ returned Theresa, in the same tone. ‘I don’t think I should know one if I saw it, at least whether it was a true one.’

‘And I don’t suppose any one but Vandyke did them much justice,’ said Alice. ‘They do sparkle there, and the lady is daintily fingering them; but they look as dead as all the rest in the first pair. I suppose those two were too stupid to get Holbein to *do* them. But down at the Church the ladies all have the necklace, Theresa, the one in a brass, and the one lying on her back with a broken nose—both too old to be in

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pictures—and this wooden one is just rising on her elbow there, and this ruffy one has got up on her knees, with all her daughters behind her, opposite to her husband with all the sons behind, growing small by degrees and beautifully less. She has her carcanet painted pink, so there's no mistake.'

'Is there a story about it?' said Theresa.

'A most delightful story,' said Alice, 'beginning with—'

'My dear, we can't begin it now,' said her aunt. 'I have to meet Saunders at the hanging wood at half-past two, and you would probably like to come with me. Are you a good walker, Theresa?'

And as Theresa answered for her capabilities, Alice entreated, 'Then will you tell us all the story—real, right once-upon-a-time fashion in blind man's holiday, like a good old aunty?'

'Very well, only I warn you, Theresa, that it has by no means a satisfactory conclusion. Put on stout boots, young ladies.'

They had a pleasant walk across the

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meads, still very green, and crossed by a raised path in good repair, such as is to be found where ladies love their home farms. Fine cows were to be seen, for Miss St. Lo's farm was a dairy one, and Theresa was a little nervous at their approach, especially when the Skye terrier danced round their heads ; but it seemed as if mistress, dogs, and cows quite understood one another, and there was a little affectionate fondling at one of the gates of a great creature with long horns, and what Theresa at first took for a white sheet fastened round her.

The woods came sloping down to the meadows—beech woods, in all manner of shades of amber brown. There was a talk to the woodman, as to the condemnation of such trees as could best be spared, where thinning was needed ; then a visit to his old mother at his lodge ; a walk back by a raised path by the riverside ; a visit to the rick-yard, where a machine was puffing and humming away over the threshing ; and a few steps away, the barn-yard, where swarms of poultry of all kinds came to be fed, including a peacock, conscious just now

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of moulting, and very cross, so that there was a struggle to keep him away from driving off the rest of the fowls.

Altogether Theresa was still rather awed, it was so little like a dream of a strange rural world, yet so very unlike any of her former experiences, and she felt the dream-like sense still more, when all three were seated on low chairs in the drawing-room over afternoon tea, and Alice claimed the story of the rubies.

‘As if you hadn’t heard it over and over again, you silly child.’

‘But Theresa hasn’t. I say, Terry, don’t you know Henry VI.’s picture, how he always has a collar of jewels, and a cross below? The collar is SS, but this is the cross. No, no, aunty, I’m not going to tell the story myself, only to show Theresa that she must—

‘With grateful memory still adore
Her Henry’s holy shade.

Now then.’

‘Well, my dear, since you will have it, here it is, such as it is in our family traditions, backed by a few scraps of

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letters and wills. It was before one of poor Henry VI.'s battles—I never could make out which, most likely the first at St. Albans—that he slept a night here, when, of course, there were more defences, and he ended by leaving some of his treasure behind, as in safe keeping, and the young knight and his wife—she was Katharine de Moels—who pledged themselves never to disclose where it was. In the battle, the knight, Sir Roland, was killed, and by and by, though Dame Katharine tried to hold out the house, the White Rose people forced their way in. They suspected that the treasure was there, and tried to compel her to tell where it was. Edward IV.—he must have been Earl of March then—was always cruel, you know, and he went as near torture as he dared. The story is that he had her hands tied and the fingers' ends burnt with lighted tow, but still she would not say whether the treasure was in the house or not, and then he took her little baby, the heir, and said he should be taken away that he might not be brought up a traitor; and still she held out, till at

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last the Duke of York arrived, very angry at his son's brutality, and set her and her child free. Next, as the story goes, when King Henry was free again, and there was that great day of love at St. Paul's, when he was so happy, and all the rivals walked hand in hand, she came with her little son by her side and knelt at his feet, and restored the casket of treasure to him. He saw her scorched hands, and heard the whole history. Then he said there was no reward fit for such faith and loyalty, but he opened the casket, and threw his own collar and cross of rubies—red for suffering, he said—over her head, and bade her boy keep it for his children's children, to show how great had been his mother's truth and constancy ; and the honourable augmentation of the cross gules was granted them.'

'Oh! that is lovely,' cried Theresa.

'She is the lady of the brass,' said Alice ; 'she has her widow's veil turned back to show the carcanet.'

'And where are the rubies now?' asked Theresa, eagerly.

'That's the question,' said Alice ; 'I

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wish they had gone in the Great Rebellion, it would have been more creditable, but they didn't.'

'I believe the handsome Cavalier who, by the bye, was a Roman Catholic, died just before the outbreak, and I suppose his son's guardians would not give away his inheritance and heirlooms,' replied her aunt. 'Any way, they were preserved till the time of Dame Theresa, whose husband was the first baronet. She was a St. Lo by birth herself, and a very stately, resolute lady. I have plenty of letters of hers, in very queer spelling, which prove it. Her son and his wife seem to have been bad specimens; they were always about the Court in the days of George II., and the wife especially was a terrible gambler at cards. The stern old mother did all she could to keep them from ruining the property, but it was then that all the outlying farms were sold, and the oak wood cut down. One day, young madam came down in her coach, and demanded the rubies to wear at Court. The casket was given to her, and when opened in London, it was empty. There was a

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great disturbance : she accused her mother-in-law of having made away with them, and as no reasonable person could believe any such thing of Dame Theresa, others thought that the young Madam Arabella had gambled them or their price away, and only pretended that she found the case empty. The collar and cross were, however, never heard of more. There is a minute description of them, by which even the stones could be recognised ; and the family belief is that the old lady detected, or at least suspected, some design of changing them for false ones, and probably hid them away. She survived both her son and his wife, but was paralytic at the last ; and when dying she tried to say something to her grandson, which he thought was about the rubies, the well, and truth, but it could not be made out.'

'Oh, how Roland and I have hunted for them,' said Alice.

'So have I ! So has every generation since,' replied Miss St. Lo. 'But, alas ! the romance of the St. Lo rubies is a story without an end ! Nothing is left of them but the record in the coat-of-arms.'



CHAPTER V

‘WHAT’s that voice?’ cried Alice, springing up, as there were sounds in the hall as of ordering a muddy dog into retirement, and out she flew, followed by Miss St. Lo, when exclamations of, ‘Roly, dear old Rol, how delicious!’ and, ‘Roland, my dear boy, are you wet?’

‘Only dirty, Aunt Terry, too dirty for your drawing-room. Ah, thanks, Alice,’ as a thick, solid boot resounded on the floor, ‘good girl to remember the slippers! Telegram not come, eh! I told Forbes to send up my things; I got my leave three days sooner than I expected, so I thought I might come and have a pop at the peasants.’

‘There, hush,’ cried his sister, ‘you are shocking Theresa. She’ll think we

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have got some awful marksman among us, bent on thinning the population.'

'Unaware that Robson, the old keeper, always calls the pheasants peasants,' said Miss St. Lo, meeting Theresa's bewildered eyes as she re-entered the drawing-room, followed by Alice, with a hand fondly on the arm of a tall, bright-faced youth. 'Here is Alice's brother, Roland Tresham. Another cousin, Roland—Theresa St. Lo.'

They shook hands, and Theresa listened to the eager talk of home matters between brother, sister, and aunt; only interrupted when his telegram arrived, sent in a leisurely manner from the post-office with the second delivery, an arrangement which the recipient took much more coolly than the sender, declaring that he should blow up old Harris.

'He knows how I hate telegrams, and wishes to spare my nerves,' said Miss St. Lo.

'Theresa looks shocked,' said Alice.

'I like telegrams,' said Theresa, bluntly.

'The modern and the ancient world,' said Roland.

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They were all amused at a certain sturdy bluntness of Theresa's, who seemed to be afraid of putting on the least disguise.

She happened to be in the drawing-room with Mr. Tresham before the other ladies appeared ; and when, finding her looking at the music on the piano, he asked whether she played any of these, she answered :—

‘ Oh no ! I can do little more than hear the scales.’

He laughed. ‘ That's a humble estimate.’

‘ It is all I am good for. I am a daily governess when I am at home,’ and she looked him full in the face, as if resolved that he should hear the worst of her ; and when Alice, who had advanced unseen over the soft carpet from the open door of the library, exclaimed : ‘ Don't talk of those horrors. You are come to take my place, and be my aunt's guest,’ Theresa said : ‘ Her humble companion, if you please, if I am not too ignorant and stupid.’

It was as if she had put on a set of bristles on Roland's appearance ; and

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when he asked some question about her place of abode, her answer was, briefly, 'At Wallbridge.'

'At Wallbridge! I know some people near it. Do you know the Lyons?'

'Only their carriage. Oh no, we don't know any one of *that* sort. My father was an engineer employed by Nares and Co.'

Alice was rather surprised and vexed by her retreat from equality with the family; but Miss St. Lo, looking on shrewdly though kindly, suspected that Theresa, transparent at all times, had seen enough of the world to be aware that, with her aristocratic name and ladylike appearance, it was wiser not to let young men converse with her on false pretences. However, when she had made it known on what terms she believed herself to stand, she was more at her ease, and they had a pleasant merry evening over a paper game. Miss St. Lo had a great turn for drawing-room games, and Roland laughed as he saw the pencils and backs of notes come out, and told Theresa she must be prepared.

'I warn you, though,' he said, 'that

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every new-comer, who has just heard the family romance, inevitably writes, “Where are the rubies?” till we have prohibited the word.’

‘ Speak for yourself, sir,’ said Alice. ‘ Aunt Terry has made a collection of the answers.’

‘ Sibylline leaves,’ said Roland. ‘ One I think is

‘ He who searches for the Ruby
Only proves himself a booby.’

‘ Nonsensical boy!’ said Alice. ‘ There was one really good one :—

‘ When the Lady of St. Lo
The jewels hid where none may know,
She laid on them a mighty spell,
Her sons and daughters know it well.
None ever shall the casket find
But such as ever bear in mind
The meaning of this saying sooth,
“ Within a well there lies the truth.”’

‘ Who made that remarkable oracle?’ asked Roland.

‘ See Aunt Terry’s conscious looks!’ said Alice, laughing. ‘ I believe she did.’

‘ Oh no, my dear,’ said her aunt. ‘ Did you never see her name on the back of the paper? It was my dear cousin

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Kate, who died young, and it was very odd, but she always said that she dreamt those last lines—woke in the early morning with them ringing in her ears.'

'Had not she dreamt of Dame Theresa?' said Alice.

'I believe she often did dream of her,' said Miss St. Lo. 'I have dreamt of the Lady myself—the talking over the legend seems to excite the imagination.'

'No doubt we shall to-night,' said Roland. 'Don't you see her likeness?'

'Oh,' cried Alice, 'now I see!'

'Mine!' exclaimed Theresa, 'to that horrid starched old thing, with her feathers, and her head a yard high?'

'It's not her feathers or her cocker-nonny,' said Alice, 'but her eyebrows and her mouth. Don't you see it, Aunt Terry?'

'Now you mention it, I do,' said Miss St. Lo. 'You need not be displeased, Theresa. She was a Court beauty in her day!'

'What a horrid thing to be!' said Theresa in her contradictory voice.

'Take the beauty without the Court,' said Roland, at which her chin went up

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disgusted. Indeed, she was absolutely provoked at actually dreaming of Dame Theresa, feathers, rolled-up hair, long waist, rubies and all, the very next night, or rather morning, and when she awoke those last lines were ringing in her ears :—

The meaning of this saying sooth,
‘Within a well there lies the truth.’

‘It was such foolish reiteration, just as if I wanted to imitate that Kate, and lay claim to all their grandeur, when I have always said ancestors are nonsense.’

So she really looked grim when Roland and Alice, at breakfast, began comparing her with the portrait, and finding a resemblance.

‘With the powder and the cushion for the hair, it would be complete,’ said Miss St. Lo, using her glasses to compare the portrait and the maiden.

‘She doesn’t appreciate the compliment,’ said Roland. ‘Just so, doubtless, did my lady look at that flimsy Arabella in her patch.’

‘I declare,’ cried Alice, ‘I believe she

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has been dreaming of her ! Now have you, Theresa ?'

She was forced to own it.

'Yes. Everybody does, you heard, after all the stuff you have talked about her.'

Alice looked up amazed. Theresa was conscious of having been uncivil to Miss St. Lo, and did not know whether she was glad or sorry for having asserted her independence.

Roland observed : 'I have been pondering over that old saw—not that it is really old, except as a proverb.'

'What, that truth is at the bottom of a deep well?' said his sister.

'Kate—my dear cousin—used to twist the saying into a sort of forecast that the rubies were at the bottom of the well,' said Miss St. Lo ; 'but, alas ! when it was cleaned out, nothing came out but pins and a kitten's skeleton. Then she said it must mean that the rubies should be found by one of the house who had never said anything but the truth.'

'That is a very pretty saying,' said Alice. 'Did she mean that one must

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never have told even a childish falsehood, like the one we told about the peaches?’

‘Dear old Katie, she wasn’t a witch or spae wife,’ said Miss St. Lo, smiling. ‘Of course no one believes those rubies ever will be found. Very likely the old lady did dispose of them in the well, though they never came out of it.’

‘Threw them in in a temper,’ said Theresa. ‘I am sure I should!’

‘Her true descendant,’ said Roland.

At which they all laughed; but his aunt thought the girl had been teased enough, and asked whether the keeper had sent in any message about the day’s shooting.





CHAPTER VI

‘ALICE said you wished to speak to me about your money matters,’ said Miss St. Lo, detaining Theresa, as Alice, catching up a cloak, ran after her brother, to speed him in his sporting preparations.

‘Oh !’ exclaimed Theresa, in an odd sort of tone, really signifying that though she was relieved that the ice should be broken, she would rather have been left to do it herself.

‘Just as you please,’ said Miss St. Lo, not quite understanding the tone, ‘only if you wish to say anything to me, I am at your service in the library.’

‘Thank you. Oh ! yes, I wanted to show you—I will only run and fetch my account.’

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Theresa sped upstairs, and came down with a neat little book, with a list of her expenses, which she laid before Miss St. Lo.

‘There’s what I was obliged to spend,’ she said in her almost ungracious way, ‘and I wanted to know whether there was anything else that you wished me to do with the rest, or if I am free to let Cora have some music lessons, and to subscribe to a library for Katie.’

‘My dear, you are quite welcome to do what you please with it ; but you will want some pocket-money.’

‘I have fifteen and sixpence of my own,’ said Theresa, as if that was wealth, standing before Miss St. Lo, straight and rigid, as one called to account.

‘Sit down, my dear,’ said Miss St. Lo, smiling, for she was much amused. ‘I had better tell you what I had thought of, in case you and I suit each other, as I think we seem likely to do. However, we cannot really judge till Alice has left us. You see how she helps me, writing my letters, reading to me, and assisting in parish work.’

‘Yes.’

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‘ I have every prospect of losing more and more of my eyesight as time goes on, and I thought if you could give your time to me, as my young cousin and friend, that I would give you twenty pounds a quarter to meet your unavoidable expenses ; and as you are a good manager, no doubt there would be a margin for your sister’s pleasures.’

‘ Oh !’—a very different ‘ Oh !’ from the first.

‘ You would like it ? ’

‘ Miss St. Lo, it is better than anything I ever could have hoped. Nobody ever offered me more than thirty pounds a year, and I never even got the whole of that, for I never learnt anything properly, and am fit to teach nothing but babies ; and then I always contrive to offend people.’

Miss St. Lo laughed.

‘ You are brusque, I suppose ? ’

‘ Yes, and mother says it is silly to tell the people when their children are horrid, and I can’t manage them. She said I should never get any employment again in the town.’

‘ How old are you ? Nineteen ?

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Well, you have time before you to improve in gentleness, and perhaps in other things.

‘Indeed, I will try! Getting nice books will be a comfort to Katie for missing me! And mother will be really glad.’

‘Then now you shall try whether you can write a letter from my dictation.’

Theresa wrote very tidily, though a little slowly, but gratitude and exultation carried her through the distraction of hearing merry voices in the avenue.

On the whole, Miss St. Lo was pleased with her young cousin. There was certainly an abruptness and aggressiveness about the girl, not exactly unlady-like, but at times by no means gracious, and certainly not what would be expected in a daily governess or humble companion; and Miss St. Lo could quite believe in the displeasure of the matrons of Wallbridge; but for her own part she was amused. She did not want her companion to be technically humble—least of all, one who shared her name and blood, nor would that character have suited the features of the original Dame

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Theresa. She only expected that better society and influence might bring the needful softening. For the rest, Theresa seemed to have more power of attention and less desultory habits than Alice, and the work of the morning was satisfactorily despatched, after which Miss St. Lo took up her knitting, and began to ask questions about Katie's condition, and the accident which had caused her ill-health, and to what sort of library she meant to subscribe—on which one of Theresa's peculiar replies was elicited—‘She would not read improving books.’

‘Not at all, do you mean? Or that she wants a story-book by way of play, poor child?’

‘We never could get her to read anything stupid.’

‘You have tried?’

‘Well, yes, but it makes her back ache.’

‘And what do you call stupid? History?’

‘Oh yes—very.’

‘Travels?’

‘Horrid!’

‘Waverley Novels?’

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‘Father read *Ivanhoe* to me, and I liked that ; but we have only one besides. It is so long and so dry that Katie cried once when there was nothing else for her to read.’

‘I should be afraid she was going on in a way to make invalid life all the more trying. We must think what is to be done for her, poor child. How old is she ?’

‘Fourteen last May. Do you mean that I ought not to get amusing books for her ? You don’t know how dull her life is, and all the more so without me.’ Theresa’s eyes filled with tears.

‘My dear ! I only wish to see how to make the poor child understand that a little application to a daily duty would give spirit and interest to her day.’

‘Mrs. Golding said that—our clergyman’s wife—but it seemed so cross and unkind to Kate that she can’t bear the sight of her, and mamma told her not to mind, for she was not fit to be bothered.’

‘Ah !’ sighed Miss St. Lo, at this confession. ‘We must think,’ she repeated, and she was about to inquire about the younger girl and her studies,

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when the downright Theresa returned to the charge.

‘If you disapprove of my getting her library books, it is not fair to use your money for it. So please tell me.’

‘That is a most honest scruple. Indeed, I could not wish to deprive her of any enjoyment, poor dear ; but at the same time it does not seem to me safe to turn a girl of fourteen loose upon a circulating library. Suppose I lend you books for her reading—I have a great many, specially for young girls—and you could send her the postage for their return.’

Theresa agreed to this, though not without some qualms as to whether Miss St. Lo’s notions of the amusing might agree with Katie’s ; but Miss St. Lo found a tale that answered to her views, and added to it an attractive account of the Deep Sea Mission. Theresa could not at first think why.

Afterwards they talked over Cora, who was more inclined to use her opportunities. Theresa ardently wished to give her the means of preparing to be a superior governess, and did not

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think the only day-school at Wallbridge satisfactory, even with the extras she hoped to be able to procure for her. Again, Miss St. Lo promised to consider what had best be done, being, in fact, a good deal more drawn towards the earnest, straightforward daughter than towards the mother. Something in the letter of acceptance, some unconscious betrayals in talk, gave her a strange sense of shiftiness, and inspired something of mistrust; while Theresa was almost too transparent. When Alice came in eager and rosy, having walked half over the woods with her brother, and detailing his success with the game, the looks of dismay and horror she excited were a sight.

‘What!—look on and see the poor birds and hares killed! How could you?’

‘I did look the other way,’ said Alice, ‘if they weren’t quite dead. Don’t look so shocked.’

‘I think it horrible!’ said Theresa, decidedly.

‘Then I suppose you will never speak to Roland again?’

‘It is the nature of *man*.’

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‘Then you think it worse in a woman to look on than in a man to do it !’ said Alice, half laughing ; but Theresa was quite serious.

‘Yes, I do,’ she said.

‘It was not the way of my generation,’ put in Miss St. Lo ; ‘but the treat of a walk with a brother will carry off a good deal. Did Roland look at the new buildings on Hargrave’s farm, Alice ?’

This closed the discussion, but Theresa felt for a time as if she should never like Alice so well as before.

The impression, however, wore away when the two girls joined in attentions to a damaged kitten, and Alice’s real tenderness was visible. Those were very pleasant days during the remainder of the cousins’ visit. Roland was not always pheasant-shooting, nor Alice accompanying him. There was a showery afternoon, when there were two rival games of battledore-and-shuttlecock in the hall, and Roland and his aunt gained the day by several hundreds beyond the two giddy maidens. There was a grand expedition with pony-carriage and ponies to the seashore in quest of any curiosi-

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ties cast up by the waves. The aunt had nearly exhausted the possibilities, but Alice's juniors were in the fever of collectors, and always expected some fresh discovery from a visit to the Manor. It was all new and delightful to Theresa, opening new vistas of life, and she began to see how some such interest would enliven Katie, and to meditate how to impart the idea in her letters.

The Sunday was a busy one. Roland was wont to declare that Aunt Terry toiled like any clergyman on her day of rest, and bantered his sister and Theresa on the work expected of them ; but Theresa had been on the Sunday School staff at Wallbridge, and willingly succeeded to Alice's class, though she made no secret that she thought the scholars very inferior in looks, conduct, and abilities, and did not admire the Northam system. Miss St. Lo could not help saying :—

‘ My dear, you need not make all your opinions so very prominent.’

Theresa begged her pardon good-humouredly. Alice smoothed down the

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feathers that were ruffling up, and Roland's parting comment was :—

‘She will be a jolly little brick when she is not quite so much of a turkey-cock !’





CHAPTER VII

ALONE with Miss St. Lo, Theresa ceased to have sparring matches. She enjoyed being useful, and she proved more so than Alice had been. She wrote more quickly and more distinctly, and could read well; while, as she grew more at home, she was ready with innumerable little services. The choice of books was probably made with a view to her benefit as well as the elder lady's amusement, for they were often of the older order, unknown to and neglected by shallow youth.

The maiden could not help having a sense of growth, as it were, and was happy, except so far as regarded home matters. She knew that Katie missed her sorely, and did not always appre-

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ciate the books provided by Miss St. Lo ; but what worried her most was the constant endeavour of her mother to impress on her that she must cultivate her rich kinswoman, and try to stand high in her good graces. It was not pleasant to get a letter full of gratitude to ‘ dear Miss St. Lo for her kindness in providing such admirable and useful reading for our sweet invalid,’ and immediately after a pencilled scrawl from the sweet invalid herself—‘ Why do you send such dry stuff ? Is it the old lady’s doing ? Horrid old frump ! ’ And in answer to a letter which, with full conviction, Theresa had written to explain the expedience, not to say the duty, of self-improvement and mental exertion, she received—‘ It is too bad of you to bother your poor little sister with jaw ; but I suppose you can’t help it.’

The effect of the book on the Deep Sea Fishing Expedition was, however, to cause an eager undertaking of knitting on behalf of the fishers and seamen ; but Theresa soon detected when it flagged, and the proceeds were a pair of cuffs, one knitted much more tightly than the

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other, a tolerable comforter, and two pairs of stockings, with a letter from Katie, who certainly did not blink the truth, saying :—

‘ I really couldn’t do more than that one cuff—it made my back ache so ; and that hard coarse yarn for the stockings hurts one’s fingers so.’

While the mother’s letter said Katie was so interested, and so glad to do anything for those poor seamen. This was evidently meant to be shown, and all this made Theresa doubly plain-spoken. She made no secret that Katie murmured at the books and failed in the work, and she was rather surprised to find that Miss St. Lo only pitied, but showed neither wonder nor resentment, knowing perhaps what was to be expected from a spoilt invalid child. But when Theresa’s revulsion of feeling made her unnecessarily critical, and sometimes almost rude to the visitors who frequented the Manor, Miss St. Lo thought it well to call her to order, waiting, however, till there was some intimacy and confidence between them.

‘ My dear,’ she said, as they sat down

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by firelight after the departure of some visitors, ‘there was no need to tell Mrs. Leslie that you hated dachshunds.’

‘They are horridly ugly.’

‘Every one to his taste, you know ; but why vex her by finding fault ?’

‘I could not say what I did not think.’

‘Certainly not ; but were you obliged to be uncourteous ?’

‘Surely one ought to speak the truth —the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth !’ said Theresa, not in her aggressive style, but meditatively, as if thinking out a question.

‘The truth, and nothing but the truth, decidedly, as we believe it to be, for we are not always capable of knowing the perfect truth. But the whole truth it may sometimes be better to——’

‘Oh, Miss St. Lo !’ broke in Theresa, ‘I did not think you could be in favour of concealment and falsehood.’

‘Never in any case of falsehood, nor of the concealment, which is tantamount to deception, only when it is unnecessary, or unkind, even harmful to blurt out the whole. For instance, you were not

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bound to give your opinion of Mrs. Leslie's dog.'

'Yes, the daughter asked me if he was not a darling beauty!'

'Without committing yourself to his beauty, could not you have said that he seemed very fond of her, or that he looked intelligent — which he did — or even that he was a droll fellow?'

'Umph,' was all that Theresa vouchsafed.

'Think about it, my dear, for though it is better than the other extreme, yet the contradictory mood is not a safe one.'

Theresa subsided. Though not very amiably or courteously, she had really taken the reproof from Miss St. Lo better than if it had come from almost any one else, because she really respected that lady, and had a strong sense of her truthfulness, knowing too that her own rough openness was usually received without the same forbearance. In fact, Miss St. Lo had begun to perceive that this demonstrative plain-speaking was probably the recoil of a sincere nature against one less candid; and she

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was on that account doubly anxious to deal wisely and gently with the young relation who interested her more and more.

Thus time went on, not without some softening and improvement, almost unconsciously on the young lady's part, and in alternations of occupation at home, parish, and a quiet county lady's society, and several visits from old friends, and a few flashes of Roland Tresham for shooting days, with brother-officers and neighbours.

Miss St. Lo always stayed at home for Christmas, to provide for the brightening of the village ; but after the Northam pleasures had been provided for, she intended to go to stay at her sister's home, and send Theresa to Wallbridge for the time ; but this was delayed by the good lady catching a very bad bronchial cold, which kept her long in bed, and for two months between her bedroom and dressing-room, and, moreover, seriously affected her eyes. She was never ill enough to send for Mrs. Tresham, who was in the midst of the children's holidays, and her own maid

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was a very efficient nurse ; but Theresa was a most useful supplement, waiting on her whenever her good Mrs. Reeves needed rest and variety, reading to her, writing bulletins and business letters, going on her errands, and bringing home entertaining reports. The apprenticeship to a sick-room in Kate's case rendered her an excellent attendant on a convalescent, and it was wonderful how many of the little asperities of her nature were pared down by her consideration for her patient.

Poor Katie grumbled dreadfully, and was sure that her sister might long ago have been spared, and that one of the Treshams ought to have come to relieve her ; but the sailor brother was at home on leave, and it was not till just before his departure that he came, with his mother, Roland, and a younger sister, to Northam Manor, and Theresa was set free for her visit to her home, while Miss St. Lo would go back with her nearer relations.

Cora's affairs had not been forgotten. There was a High School at Newminster, the Archdeacon's cathedral town, which

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was a special hobby of his, and she was to be boarded in the house of a former governess of his daughters, and attend it, with occasional holiday Sundays with the Treshams, beginning at Easter. Mrs. Tresham asked about her exact age, which Theresa could of course give.

‘And,’ said Miss St. Lo, ‘I should like to fill up the pedigree. You can help me, Theresa.’

‘Oh! do show us the pedigree!’ cried the young cousin, another Theresa, called by her last syllables.

Miss St. Lo smiled. ‘I always had a fellow-feeling for Alphonse in the *Veillées du Château*, when he saved the pedigree in the earthquake of Lisbon rather than anything else, though, poor fellow, it proved a false one.’

‘Well, you know my Archdeacon does not believe in ours beyond Edward III.,’ said Mrs. Tresham, laughing.

‘Ah! that’s to tease us,’ returned her sister, getting up and unlocking one of the carved doors at the base of the book-cases of the library where they were sitting, and bringing out a roll.

It was an imposing spectacle, all on

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parchment, and beginning before the Battle Roll, beautifully written, and arranged like the branches of a creeper, coming down from the top. Each head of the family had a circle to himself, and beside it was his shield, ‘party per pale’ with the bearings of his wife, all beautifully painted and gilded.

The two sisters could name every curious heraldic bearing scientifically, ‘like signal flags,’ said Will Tresham, and the two young Theresas looked over it with a certain awe, and were shown the name of the heroine who guarded King Henry’s jewels, and whose record the draughtsman had encircled with a little collar of rubies. Then again came the St. Lo bearing doubled on the shield, and there stood the name which they, like their aunt, bore, in memory of the stately dame who, if she had made away with the rubies, had still left a deep impression of her high character in the family. There, too, were marked the frivolous grandson and his more frivolous Arabella, and their three sons, the two eldest who had died s.p., *sine prole*, namely childless, the second of them in

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1779. ‘At the battle of Brandywine,’ said Mrs. Tresham.

‘One can’t put in such a frightful name,’ said Miss St. Lo; ‘besides, it was on the wrong side. Ah! Terry, I forgot. It was very good of you not to explode at once.’

‘I’m American enough not to think it the wrong side,’ said Theresa.

‘He was a spendthrift, a likeness of his mother, and ran away,’ said Miss St. Lo; ‘and, happily, was killed before he could damage the property, before his brother Roland died, you see.’

‘Let us hope he was a hero in his death,’ said Mrs. Tresham. ‘Then here’s our great grandfather—your great great grandfather, you children. You see how you branch off here, Theresa.’

‘There’s Henry St. Lo, the third generation,’ said the aunt. ‘You three girls ought to be put in.’

‘Not by you, Terry,’ rejoined the sister. ‘I won’t have you straining your eyes with black letter. I’ll do it to-morrow morning. You, Theresa, give me names and dates.’

Theresa gave her mother’s Christian

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name, Cora Alinda, the time of the father's death, and the names and birthdays of herself and sisters ; but, to her confusion, she found herself really ignorant of her mother's maiden name and of the date of her marriage, but she promised to ascertain these, and to send back the intelligence in time for Mrs. Tresham to insert it before starting for Newminster.





CHAPTER VIII

IT is needless to describe Theresa's welcome—how her mother looked at her with delight, Cora hung upon her, and Katie's face beamed as her beloved sister sat by her on a footstool, and gave herself up to her caressing hands, while all commented with admiration on her looks and dress. Cora was in raptures at the prospect of leaving 'this stupid place,' though Kate declared that no one thought how dismal it would be for her to be the only one left at home.

'Never mind now,' said Theresa; 'don't let me spoil the present now that we are all at home together.'

Torrents of news were poured forth on either side during the meal, and the sisters were charmed and impressed by

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Theresa's declaring that it was so home-like and comfortable to make one's own toast, and wash up one's own tea-things.

'I thought you would be afraid of all our grand ancestors being shocked,' said Cora.

'Why should they? I am sure Miss St. Lo liked me all the better when I told her about it.'

'Patronising?' said Katie.

'Oh no, no; she has not a particle of patronage in her. She thought it sensible.'

'And you went and told her everything!' said Mrs. St. Lo.

'Of course I did; she was so kind, I could not help it; and she was pleased. She would have thought it really vulgar to pretend to be better off than we are, besides being false.'

'There, mother!' said Katie.

'Those ways may do with some people, it seems,' observed her mother, 'but they won't go down with every one. Tradespeople are twice as civil to me now that it is known where you are living—yes, and gentlefolks too!'

'Mother, that's not like an American—'

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born woman!' cried Theresa. 'Oh! and by the bye, Miss St. Lo wanted to know your maiden name, and I was quite ashamed that I did not know.'

'I was Cora Alinda Vanhoven,' replied Mrs. St. Lo. 'A very good old family at Albany. But there are none of them left now.'

'Albany! However did my father get there?' muttered Kate.

'And,' proceeded Theresa, 'she wants to know the date of your marriage to him.'

'Well, I call that prying! Whatever can it matter to her?' exclaimed the mother.

'It is for the pedigree,' said Theresa, and as her sister exclaimed—'Yes, it is a beautiful great genealogy, all written out on parchment in black letter and illuminated, showing how we all came down from a Norman Baron de Saint Leu before the time of William the Conqueror. It is quite a handsome thing to look at, and our father's name is there. I never respected myself half so much as when I saw what I came from.'

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'Are we in it?' asked Cora, eagerly.

'Mrs. Tresham is going to write us all in, like the rest. I gave her all our birthdays, but she wanted to know about mother's name and the date of the marriage.'

Mrs. St. Lo considered a minute, and then said: '1869—yes, it was 1869—the 14th of June.'

Theresa noted it down on a scrap of paper, and the talk drifted away to a description of as many of the Treshams as she had seen. Indeed, the mother seemed desirous of leading away from the subject.

The next morning, while Mrs. St. Lo was gone out to do her marketings, Theresa sat down to write her letter, but presently jumped up in dismay in a wild search for the scrap of paper where she had jotted down her mother's answer. Was it the 4th or 14th of June, 1868 or '69?

'Oh! what can it matter?' demanded Cora. 'Who will care?'

'It ought to be true,' said Theresa; and after a vain rush to her own room, and Kate's declaration that the maid was

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certain to have lighted the fire with the paper, she began to sigh : ‘If I don’t send it by the early post, it will not arrive in time for Mrs. Tresham to make the entry before they go to Newminster. When will mamma come in?’

‘Most likely not for ever so long,’ said Kate. ‘She will poke over all the chickens and ducks in the place, and go bargaining half an hour apiece, and then very likely go and impress old Miss Brown or somebody with your grandeur! Perhaps she will go to church too. You’ll be lucky if she comes home before half-past twelve.’

‘I’ll tell you how you may find out,’ said Cora. ‘There’s an old Bible of papa’s in the corner of the press, and there are all our dates in it; for I have looked.’

Cora fetched the book, and very dirty it was; but as she opened it she broke into an exclamation of intense surprise.

‘Why, what’s this? It is not mother at all. Yes it is! “Cora Alinda.” But——’

‘Let me see,’ and Theresa caught

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hold of the Bible, and read on the fly-leaf :—

“Henry Roland St. Lo, married on the 13th of August, 1870, Cora Alinda, widow of Elijah Cicero Lowe, at Rio Janeiro, by the Rev. P. H. Smith.”’

Then followed the entry of births, baptisms, and deaths of two sons, followed by the two existing sisters !

‘What is it? what is it? Why don’t you tell me?’ cried Kate, raising herself petulantly as the other two stood staring at the record.

‘Why, Theresa, it is not there at all!’ cried Cora.

‘And she was a widow!’ chimed in Theresa.

‘Give it to me, give it to me!’ imperiously called Kate.

They came nearer, as she sprang up, and she read out the words, adding :—

‘Mother said she was married at Albany. I see,—Theresa’s words came slowly. ‘It must have been to this Elijah,—I must be his child. Oh! how dreadful !’

She sank down upon a chair and did not speak while the two little sisters

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examined the document, and Cora's puzzled 'Then is Terry somebody else after all?' sent Katie into an odd peal of laughter.

Full in the midst the mother came in, having despatched her business earlier than she expected. She stood aghast at the aspect of her daughters. None of them quite liked to speak, but Theresa pointed to the Bible, on which her first feeling was anger.

'Whoever gave you leave to be meddling and prying?' she exclaimed.

'Nobody ever told me not!' cried Cora; 'and Terry had lost the paper, and wanted to write to the old ladies.'

'Bother the old ladies! What did it signify? I'm sure your poor dear father adopted you and made no difference between you and the rest, but was as fond of you—'

'So he was,' said Theresa. 'But, mother, who am I really?'

'Of course, my poor Elijah's child. He was killed on that horrid Argentine line only the week after you were born. And there was I, not seventeen years old, all alone with nothing but a horrid

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brown woman in a hut, without a white woman, not even a Portuguese, near me. The only wonder is that we are either of us alive now. It was papa—Harry Lo we called him then—who came to tell me. He had held him in his arms when he died, and promised him to take care of us. Well, there was I all alone, with hardly any money, no one to see to me. There was a talk of subscription to get me home, but what was the use of that? Our land in New England was worked out, and my brother was gone west, I did not know where; so Harry, who was goodness itself, said he would make it all right if he married me. How else could he keep his promise to Elijah? He would bring up my baby as his own. And so he did, Terry; you can't say anything else.'

‘No, indeed I can’t. Dear papa!’

‘He was as fond of you as any of his own; and when he got a fresh appointment, away from all our old set, and moved to Melbourne, no one ever guessed that you were not his child. I am sure we forgot.’

‘But my name!’ said Theresa.

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‘I tell you no one ever called him anything but Lo. I believe he signed himself by the St., but people took it for an initial. It was not till we came to England, and he took up his family connections and associations then, that he chose us all to be called St. Lo, as well as the rest.’

‘Though I had no right,’ sighed Theresa.

‘A pretty awkward fuss it would have made, to keep you Lowe, when all the rest were St. Lo ; and what did it signify to anybody ?’

‘It does signify a great deal at the Manor,’ said Theresa. ‘Oh, mother, how could you send me there ?’

‘Well, I forgot,’ said Mrs. St. Lo, who, as her daughters knew only too well, could always forget what it was not convenient to remember.

‘Forgot !’ said Theresa, with a certain contempt in her tone. ‘So now I have been passed off on them as a real St. Lo, when I am nothing but an impostor.’

‘Theresa, Theresa, how can you ?’ exclaimed her mother, crying. ‘I did nothing false. They asked me to send

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them my eldest daughter, and so I did. What else could I have done? How could I have sent poor Katie?’

‘You might have told the truth,’ said Theresa pitilessly, in her consternation.

‘Now, you ungrateful girl, going and blaming me, when I did it all for your good, and there’s never been any difference made between you,’ moaned the mother. ‘What can it matter to any one? The old lady had just what she wanted, and is as fond of you as possible, and then you turn round on me, who never said a word that wasn’t fact.’

‘You made me live a lie,’ said Theresa.

‘I’m sure I never said an untruth. Now, did I? They asked for my eldest daughter, and I sent her. And I told you when I was married, and I was!’

‘Making the truth serve the purpose of a lie! Oh, mother, mother!’

Again Mrs. St. Lo sobbed about ingratitude, and how entirely insignificant the real fact was. Indeed, with her irregular education and subsequent wandering life, she really did not estimate the enormity of foisting a person into a

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family where she had no right to appear, and could not understand her daughter's horror at the imposition on the ancient line whose spirit Theresa had imbibed.

'I must set it right without loss of time,' said Theresa.

'Oh, oh, oh! you want to ruin yourself and us too,' was Mrs. St. Lo's cry. 'When all was going on so well! Now poor Cora will lose her schooling, and we are undone, all through your nonsense and ingratitude.'

'Kate and Cora are their relations still,' said Theresa. 'You put me into Kate's place.'

'The nasty inquisitive old thing will be offended, and never do any more for us.'

'No wonder,' said Theresa, too angry and ashamed for any softening of probabilities, and turning to find her writing-case with trembling, agitated hands.

'Theresa, I desire you will not.'

'I must, mother.'

'You would put your mother to shame.'

'The shame was in the deceit.'

'Theresa, Theresa, I never thought you could be such an undutiful daughter.'

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‘Mother, there is a higher duty than even obeying you.’

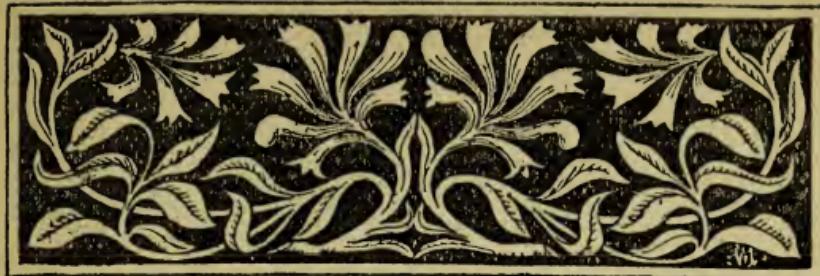
And Theresa walked out of the room, leaving her mother weeping bitterly.

The other two girls had not spoken all the time, but Kate now said: ‘Never mind now, mammie. You had better have let the old ladies know, but I dare-say they will make it up to us; and if Terry stays at home, it will be jolly.’

‘That’s all you care for,’ said her mother, petulantly. ‘When such a chance had come in her way, that she should throw it all away! ’

‘Why, mother,’ said little Cora, ‘you always told us to speak the truth.’

‘I tell you I have not said a word untrue, you naughty child! But you are all taking part against me, and you’ll see how it is when you don’t get any more help, and have to go and be a teacher at the national school! ’



CHAPTER IX

THERESA was boiling over with indignation when she ran upstairs with the first sentence seething in her mind to find vent—‘I find I am an unconscious impostor’; but when she had opened her blotting-book, she found that there was no ink in the standish, and the bottle containing the supply was in the chiffonnier downstairs. To go back thither immediately was impossible in her present frame of mind, and she decided on going to the nearest shop to purchase a sixpenny bottle.

By the time this was done, the town clock warned her that the early post which she had intended to catch was gone out, and she relaxed her pace, while the righteous wrath at the de-

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ception began to cool in proportion to the fatigue of her unnecessary speed, and the sense of consequences began to obtrude itself. She was resigning a most happy, affectionate connection, which had done her personally more good than anything else, and which opened infinite possibilities. Miss St. Lo, Alice, Roland, all foremost in the rank of those whom she had learnt to hold dear—all to be given up as by one who had come among them on false pretences, and who would scorn her henceforth. There was that element too of family importance which she had just begun to estimate enough to make her fall a hard one; while the home that had seemed so kindly and simple when she returned to it for a time, now became dull, mean, uncomfortable when she was reduced to nothing else, after that brief glimpse of the other world. ‘If I had only never been there,’ she thought; ‘or if mother had only told them, they might have had me after all! Or even if not, I should never have known this terrible pain of giving it all up—all—all! I

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wish I had written my letter at first before it began to hurt me. Suppose I didn't—who would be the wiser? No, no, no, God defend me. Or waited to go back and see the dear old lady—oh, should I dare?’

The bell for the twelve o'clock Litany began to ring. Theresa stood a moment. Somehow she felt as if her fate depended on which way she turned at that moment. If she went into church, she knew she should persevere in the confession; if not, well she was beginning to wish to put it off.

This frightened her. She hurried into the church and was on her knees in a moment, hiding her face. How much she followed the clauses there was no knowing, but her soul was in the ‘have mercy on me.’

As she came out, she was surprised to be joined by her mother. Had Mrs. St. Lo been repenting? No. The poor girl was more surprised as they walked home.

‘Have you written off hastily, Theresa?’

‘Not yet. There was no ink in my room.’

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‘Then there is time to think it over.’

‘Mother, how can you? Just out of church too!’

‘I don’t know what you mean,’ said Mrs. St. Lo, fretfully. ‘I am sure I have not said an untrue word, nor asked you to.’

‘Only to act it,’ said Theresa, bitterly.

Indeed Mrs. St. Lo, though certainly a pious woman, had never connected her religion with ‘truth in the inward parts.’ She had been a good mother, and scrupulously taught her daughters that the flat falsehoods of childhood were wicked, and in fact there was a strong truthfulness and candour of nature in both Theresa and Katie which made the seed grow readily. Mr. St. Lo likewise had shown a disdain and contempt of all deceit, which had its effect on the girls, and in the days of prosperity and of his influence his wife had fewer temptations to shuffling; but so it was, she was one of the religious people in whom the connection seemed to be lacking between her devotion and the resistance to her own peculiar defects.

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This want of perception, or obtuseness of conscience, stirred up the daughter's smouldering wrath, and with some bitterness she exclaimed: 'I hope Theresa is my real name? or is it another make up out of Thirza or something else nasty and Yankee?'

'How can you go on so?' said her mother, crying. 'No, Theresa is your real christened name. Your poor father—yes, your real father—had a young sister whose name was Theresa, who was my great friend till she died at fifteen, and he had always said his first girl should be named after her. I remember papa, Harry St. Lo, who stood godfather to you, was rather pleased, and said it was a family name.'

'So it came in handily to keep up the imposture,' sighed Theresa.

Her mother would have complained further, but for being overtaken by an acquaintance, whose congratulations and questions were almost more than Theresa could endure, and she felt as if she must plunge into the communication on the spot; but her mother's piteous looks still withheld her.

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Then came the early dinner, and then Theresa was determined that the letter should be written and posted so as to prevent any further argument or hesitation. So she dashed upstairs and locked herself into her room. She would not come out till the deed was done. Much more difficult she found it than in her first outburst, since she had realised the sacrifice for herself, as well as for her sisters, for she fully believed that, guiltless as they were, and undoubted scions of St. Lo, the fraud that their mother had practised could not be forgiven, and the prospect held out to Cora would be given up ; whilst for herself the home she was condemned to would never be the same home again.

Of the exposure of her mother's *supercherie* she was still too angry to think much till she saw it before her in her own writing.

‘MY DEAREST MISS ST. LO—Let me call you so once. You cannot be more shocked than I to find that I am an unconscious impostor. My sisters are the real daughters of Henry St. Lo,

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but my mother, when he married her, was a widow, and I am the daughter of E. C. Lowe.'

(She could not bring herself to write Elijah Cicero, to whom, poor man, she did not entertain very filial feelings, and she went on to tell the facts as she had forced them from her mother, finishing with a sentence drawn from her at last by the sense that she had denounced her poor loving parent, as the sentences looked cruel and ugly on the paper.)

' May I say in excuse for my mother that I really do not think she was aware of the wrong she was doing to the family, and that she looked on my adoption by the only father I ever knew as really identifying me with the rest? But I know better, and can only feel the shame, and thank you for all the goodness I have in no way deserved.

' Yours (and indeed it is) most gratefully and sincerely,

' THERESA LOWE.'



CHAPTER X

THE letter was gone, and the feverish waiting days began. Mrs. St. Lo was not unkind—it was not in her nature to be so—but she was very melancholy, and treated Theresa as if forgiving and condoning some offence which had to be kept out of sight.

Katie had glimmerings that her sister had done something heroic, but at the same time she was bent on defending herself from being improved, rightly divining that such was Theresa's desire, and, to tell the truth, that which gave her the most consolation. Thus the invalid indulged in being more than usually cross whenever any rational occupation was proposed to her, and looked with mistrust on every book that was put in

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her way. Nor was Theresa in a frame to bear petulant folly with patience, and she administered a sharp scolding, which made Katie cry, and much displeased her mother.

The answer came at last. It was very short:—

‘MY DEAR THERESA—I quite understand that you were very much shocked by this discovery, and I am sure you were not to blame, and have acted uprightly. I enclose a cheque for this last quarter. Of the future I can say nothing at present, as it is decided that my sister is to take me to consult H——, the great oculist. My sister is writing about Cora.—Yours ever,

‘TH. F. M. ST. LO.’

Therewith came an extremely dry and formal note from Mrs. Tresham to their mother, giving the needful directions about Cora’s journey, and explaining how she should be met at Newminster by the mistress of her boarding-house. It was plain that her education was still to be carried on, and Theresa felt that this proved that the family meant to do

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strict justice to the sister who was really a relation, and to keep their promises. How was it with regard to herself and her mother? Her heart ached over it indescribably with the affection she had learned only to have it rejected, and sense of shame undeserved. Her mother was a little consoled by finding that Cora was not to be cast off; but she could not cease to sigh over Theresa's having thrown away her chances, though, in the hope that all was not at an end, she seized gladly on the explanation that her daughter was at home because Miss St. Lo was gone to a German oculist.

Theresa was resolved that, whatever might betide, she would spend part of this twenty pounds, whether the last or not, in lessons in music, and in making her French usefully grammatical. Moreover, her taste in books had been sufficiently improved not to be limited to Katie's favourites, and she started for the station bookstall, where she had seen cheap copies of some of the authors whose works she had beheld at the Manor in robes of gilt calf clothing their many volumes. Work might

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perhaps do something, she thought, to stifle her regrets and yearnings, and at any rate it was a duty. She was looking over the piles of books, when a train came in, and, as the travellers tumbled out at the junction, or rushed for their places, she shrank out of the way, when suddenly she heard her name in a well-known voice.

‘Roland!’ she exclaimed, as her heart bounded.

‘I was sure! I knew that pheasant’s breast!’

‘You ought, for you shot it! But——’

‘I’m on my way to Exeter; but I thought I would look in between two trains, just for a sight of you. I’m lucky!’

‘Oh! oh!—thank you!’ she cried, in confusion. ‘But you know——’

‘Of course I do! A pretty row about it! Come out of the way, where one can speak.’

‘Oh! tell me, tell me!’—as they moved off the platform—‘were they dreadfully angry?’

‘Not with you—at least, they were struck all of a heap. But my father—

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yes, and Aunt Terry, said it was a brave thing in you to do, and so of course it was.'

'I couldn't help it.'

'That was the very thing!'

'Oh! and are dear Miss St. Lo's eyes very bad?'

'She has got blue spectacles. I think they are worse. Alice says she must have cried half the night, and nothing will serve my mother but carrying her off to Germany. I believe it is to divert her mind as much as her eyes. Resa is to go with them, and Alice is to stay at home to look after my father.'

'Here is the way home; come and see the girls—your *real* cousins, you know!'

'Hang it! Now I've met you, I don't want to; I've only an hour to spare. Can't we go somewhere and talk?'

Theresa detected with some pain that he had no desire to encounter her mother, or to waste this very brief visit in introductions; but she was glad enough of the meeting, and of being able to talk freely; and she led the way to a lane that afforded shade on one side.

'Did you bring me any message?' she

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asked, with anxious speech, when he seemed inclined to spend these precious minutes in vague observations.

‘Message? No—I came quite promiscuous, as old nurse says—just to see how you were getting on.’

‘It was very good of you.’

‘I couldn’t help it! I say, what a rum house that is—like pie-crust!’

‘Did you say you were going to Exeter?’

‘Yes. Manceuvres on Dartmoor are coming off, you know.’

On these same manœuvres he expatiated, evidently in an odd shy state, not exactly knowing what to talk of, and yet it was so comfortable to have him there that Theresa would have been perfectly content without a word. She mentioned the plans about Cora.

‘Oh, ay! I hope she will be jolly at Newminster. Alice will go and see her—perhaps have her out for a Sunday to play with Lucy.’

‘That would be very kind.’

They took another turn, this time in silence. Minutes were passing, and it was felt to be expedient to approach the

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station. They were close within hearing of the sounds, when Roland said :—

‘Look here, Theresa, don’t be down-hearted. You’ve been a regular brick, besides being the jolliest girl in the world. They’ll get over that ridiculous mistake in time—in fact, my aunt has almost done so already ; and, whether they do or not, I mean to come back as soon as I get my company, and make you really one of us out and out. By Jove !’

With which last exclamation he wrung her hand, and ran down the slope just as a train was coming in ; whether the right one or not Theresa never knew, so entirely was she astonished and bewildered.

There was nothing for it but to walk home, all in a glow, not only from the heat of the summer day. That she was infinitely happier was quite certain, whatever this might forebode. All the utter desolate, forsaken feeling was gone. There was one who cared for her, and in her first joy she knew that his caring for her was more than all besides.

Was she bound to mention what had passed ? She had an extreme reluctance.

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Her mother would make so much of it, and that she could not bear. While as to his own family——

No! no! no! She was out of their way, out of his reach! It would not be fair towards him to take up those words which might have meant nothing—though the world grew black at the thought. He was only twenty-one. Youths did talk nonsense (oh! was it nonsense?). No, unless anything more happened, as if he were in earnest, she was bound to take no notice, and not bring down displeasure on him. She might keep her heart warm with her happy secret without being false to any one.

When she went in, she was of course asked what had kept her out so long, and she replied :—

‘Mr. Roland Tresham was waiting for the Exeter train, so we walked about Duckett’s Lane.’

‘Mr. Roland Tresham? Oh!’ said her mother.

‘Yes; his regiment is to be on Dartmoor. How hot it is!’

‘I should think so, frying in that lane!’ said Katie. ‘It is bad enough

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here. And you have not brought me a new book.'

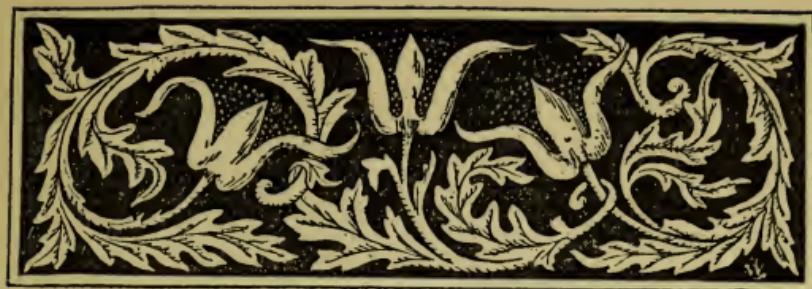
'I forgot. I beg your pardon, Katie; I'll go again to-morrow.'

Mrs. St. Lo said no more to her eldest daughter, of whom she was beginning to be a little in awe; but when Theresa had gone to take off her hat, Katie, the learned in novels, exclaimed:—

'Forgot! And Roland Tresham! Oh, mamma!'

Mrs. St. Lo smiled, but said: 'Mind, Katie, not a word to Terry. She has such ideas. She is so tenacious. One hint to her would make her upset all her chances again.'





CHAPTER XI

THERESA's spirits rose now that this undefined hope had dawned on her, whether of reconciliation, or she knew not what. At any rate, it was to her like the first gleam of light in a dark passage, so that she could go on her way cheerfully, hoping though she heard nothing.

Newspapers, except the little weekly county paper, did not come much in her way, but whenever she had a chance, she kept watch on the Dartmoor campaign as if it had been in an enemy's country, and scanned the *Graphics* months old for one especial regiment, where she might try to identify one especial lieutenant. However, she went on with her music lessons and her French class

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diligently, and whether it was that she could treat the matter with more liveliness and good nature, or that Katie's opposition to precept and example was wearing out, there was a difference in that quarter. Perhaps, however, the chief influence was from a young clergyman who had arrived, earnest about higher religious teaching, and to establish classes for the so-called educated. There was no element of flirtation, for he was known to be engaged ; but Katie would do that, under the new excitement of a gentleman's persuasion, which she could not think of for a sister.

Theresa's management made it possible for her to attend the classes, and the actual change of scene and sight of other young girls were new life and interest to her. She threw herself into the preparation, with something of the spirit of competition, but more of hope of Mr. Collier's approbation ; and as she began to perceive the depths of her own ignorance, she was inclined to read so much that her mother began to be alarmed, and to caution Theresa ; but by and by could not help acknowledging that her darling

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had never been so good-tempered, so contented, or so little ailing before, ever since that terrible fall down the hatch-way of the *Marina*.

So passed the time, with very happy letters from Cora, the only way in which Theresa heard anything of her friends. Cora was liked by the youngest Tresham girl, and spent most of her Sundays at the Archdeacon's parsonage. It was from her that Theresa learnt that Roland's regiment was to be at Plymouth, and he would not have leave for a long time. Thus there was no hope of another junction meeting. Also she heard in time that Miss St. Lo was not much better for the German treatment, and that the German regimen did not agree with her; then, that she was ill, and that the Archdeacon was going to escort the party home; then, that they had arrived; and next, that poor Aunt Terry, as the Treshams called her, was really very ill.

Theresa was very anxious, and at the end of another week, rather more than a year after her first summons to Northam Manor, there came a letter which, at the

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first glance at the outside, she knew to be from Mrs. Tresham, the person whom she had always imagined, by the omission of any kind message, to feel the most resentment. She opened it in trembling, and thus she read :—

‘DEAR THERESA—You will be sorry to hear that my sister has been seriously ill, and still is far from recovered, though we have good reason to hope that much may be the temporary effect of diet, and of the drains in the hotels. Her eyes are at present in a painful and almost useless condition, but this is in great part the effect of her state of health, and will, we hope, pass with her improvement. Meanwhile she is very anxious for your return ; I must soon leave her ; and she says that no one is so accustomed to her ways, or can attend to her wants so well as you can. Thus she hopes that you can return to her in your former position, on the same terms as previously ; and I well know that you perfectly understand the present situation, though I repeat that we all acquit you of all blame, and feel grateful for your up-

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rightness. I should be glad to know by return of post how soon you can come, as I am much needed at home, and she is longing for you.—Yours sincerely,

‘K. H. TRESHAM.’

Theresa’s colour rose with gladness as she read, and Katie watching her exclaimed: ‘Oh dear! oh dear! I knew it. The old lady wants you back; horrid old thing!’

‘She is ill and blind and wants me! Katie dear, I can’t help being glad, all except for you.’

‘Just as I was learning to be good, and to get on,’ lamented Katie. ‘I shall not care without you.’

‘Oh yes, you will, Katie; you will have Mr. Collier, and all the girls, and you will send the questions to me to answer.’

‘I wonder you like to go back. You will only be a companion, and not a cousin.’

‘So I should always have been. Indeed, I don’t think dear Miss St. Lo will make any difference. And she wants me!’ cried Theresa, as a clinching argument.

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‘I want you,’ sighed Katie.

‘Darling Kate! Yes, but only think how much good my first going has done. And you are the true cousin, you know, the real Miss St. Lo.’

Katie was forced to submit, for, of course, there was no doubt as to Theresa’s going on her own merits now, not as a distant relation or an experiment.

Would Mrs. Tresham have consented if she had known of that strange little meeting and parting? To write it was impossible; it would only seem like attaching consequence to it.

The name had not given much trouble. Theresa scrupulously signed herself Lowe, and had told several persons that she was only half-sister to Kate and Cora; but nobody much cared, after a little gossip, and besides, almost everybody called her by her Christian name at Wallbridge, nor were they always particular in giving the family their saintly prefix. She insisted on addressing her boxes by her true name, wondering a little how the Manor servants would take it. She foresaw a good deal of mortification, but the thought of

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being wanted by her dear Miss St. Lo might well make up for all.

Besides, there was that undefined thought drawing her to the Manor. There would be perplexity, there would probably be long weary waiting, there would very likely be disappointment, but at any rate *he* had once said those words, *he* had once wished it, she should always know that, and she would be among his own people and hear of him.





CHAPTER XII

THERE was real welcome for Theresa in the looks of the old coachman as he touched his hat to her, and every tree in its autumn coat looked familiar.

The butler smiled benignly in response to her greeting, and threw open the door of the room, fire-lit, as she first had seen it. Resa, a bright young girl, met her with a doubtful kiss, and Mrs. Tresham came forward with a shake of the hand, and Miss St. Lo, rising from an arm-chair, held out her arms, kissed her warmly, set her down by her side, and said in her own old tones: ‘My dear child! Now I shall be comfortable.’ Then with a little laugh: ‘That’s Lady Bertram. Ah! you have not read *Mansfield Park*?’

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Never mind, it is the first book you shall read to me.'

It was the dear well-known voice, but there was a shrunken, aged look about the face and figure, and the eyes were shaded with large blue spectacles; Theresa ventured a hope that she was better.

'I am better already since I came home again,' said she. 'Tell me how your sister is.'

So there was family talk, and Theresa was rested, and drank tea, and was told by and by that her own room was ready for her, while her namesake collected her wraps and went up with her to the chamber that looked doubly delicious after her bare shabby one at Wallbridge.

'Oh! I am glad you are come!' cried Resa, as they stood over the fire. 'No-body, except mother, seems to suit Aunt Terry so well. When she was at the worst, and not quite herself, she used to keep on murmuring, "Where's Terry?" or, "Theresa has done nothing wrong. Bring back Theresa"; and father had a great mind to send for you.'

'Where was that?'

'At Cologne. It was there that she

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was so very bad ; and it was so miserable in the hotel. I never was so glad as when at last we could get away.'

'And she asked for me ?' repeated Theresa.

'Oh yes ! Father really thought we ought to have you, only it would have been so difficult about your journey, and mother——'

'Ah ! I thought your mother was the most displeased with me.'

'She always says you were not to blame about *that*. But somehow, I believe she thinks you went on with Roland. Oh !'

Miss Resa gave a violent start as a maid knocked at the door, and the vehemence with which she proceeded to handle Theresa's bag showed a guilty consciousness of chatter having led her too far. Theresa's cheeks were in a flame ; but when she reflected, her first indignation and consternation gave way before the remembrance that Mrs. Tresham could only be arguing from the effect on Roland himself.

No more was heard from the young lady, who departed with her mother the next morning ; and then a life com-

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menced which would have been very dull except for the strong affection Theresa had for Miss St. Lo.

Things were much changed since last autumn. Whether it were from illness or advancing years, the active habits of body, though not of mind, were laid aside. Miss St. Lo breakfasted in bed, and though rising soon after, did not come downstairs till her early dinner-time, needed rest after it, and then a few turns in the sunny, sheltered garden, or a drive in the brougham, seemed all that she was fit for on fine days. Visitors interested but tired her, and the long evening passed in music, reading aloud, and chess, sometimes backgammon ; but a game needing brain was the only real pleasure to the lively nature.

Theresa had full occupation in bearing forth messages to the village and school, bringing back questions and reports, acting secretary, and amusing Miss St. Lo, who took undiminished interest in all that was going on, and especially in the Wallbridge Church history class, helping Theresa to look out what was wanted in books, and

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caring much for her desire to keep Katie from flagging.

Of Katie, indeed, she thought much. Her doctor, under whose care she was advancing towards recovery of health, was a very old friend, now getting on in years, and gradually resigning his practice to his nephew, a clever young surgeon fresh from the hospitals. Miss St. Lo enjoyed keeping her friend, Dr. Vereker, to her afternoon tea, and having a good long talk with him, ranging from politics to books, science, or the gossip of the neighbourhood, and charitable undertakings. It so happened that he could not help telling, with considerable exultation, of his young nephew's management of a long-standing spine affection, brought on by an accident, and this led to Miss St. Lo's saying :—

‘That is just like your sister, Theresa.’

‘Indeed, it is,’ said Theresa, who had been listening with a face all eagerness ; and then the particulars of Katie’s history were unfolded, and laid before the doctor, who, like his kind, asked questions but made no comment.

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It was not till the next day that Miss St. Lo said:—

‘Terry, my dear, I have been thinking. Would your mother consent to our having little Katharine here for a time to try young John Vereker’s treatment?’

Theresa could not find words to thank. She clasped her hands, looked ecstatic, and fell on her friend with a silent, rapturous kiss. She had no doubts that, however mortified her mother might be at the invitation not being extended to her, she would thankfully embrace such a hope for Katie; and Miss St. Lo was so much better than it would be quite possible to attend to both.

‘We must have a room arranged where you two can feel at home,’ said Miss St. Lo. ‘I wonder which would be best.’

‘I think, if you please,’ said Theresa, ‘it should be on this upper floor, because then Katie could lie out on the outside gallery on fine days, without having to go downstairs. There is always some place warm and sheltered,

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and she would be so much amused by the pigeons and the cats.'

Miss St. Lo laughed at this lively entertainment, but manifested her improvement by setting off with Theresa on a progress along the corridor to select the apartment. The best rooms, still guest chambers, were, of course, not thought of; and these, with Miss St. Lo's own, occupied the storey above the drawing-room; but the next side of the quadrangle was little used, and at the corner there was a quaint little room on which Theresa set her affections. It was the next to the stone outdoor stair, and gave easy access to two sides of the gallery, so as to suit either way of the weather; and the window, having once been also a doorway, could easily be restored to the same purpose again.

The walls were in panelled wainscoting, mostly in drapery pattern, but with the St. Lo shield in the centre of each one now. Those below it, at about the height of a dado, were carved in bas-relief with Scripture scenes—Adam and Eve, with the serpent coiled round the tree; Noah with an ark about half his

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own size, and a lion in ringlets heading the procession about to enter it ; Rebekah drawing water from a round well for a very queer, supercilious camel ; David killing the lion, who was killing the bear for him, with much more to be studied at leisure ; but the room was quite unfurnished.

‘Dame Theresa’s chamber,’ said Miss St. Lo.

‘And a delightful one !’ cried Theresa. ‘She had good taste. Why has no one used it ? I hope it is not haunted !’

‘Oh no—I never heard of ghosts here ! Don’t put that into Katie’s head. I imagine that the neighbourhood to the stairs was disliked, and then people took a distaste to dark oak, and thought it melancholy. I am thankful that they did not paint all this white, like the east room.’

‘Perhaps Arabella’s conscience would not let her inhabit it,’ responded Theresa. ‘You see there’s a door here which might be opened into my room, and Katie might either sleep with me, or have the little room beyond, so as to be within call. Oh, what fun it will be !

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And if she should really get better!' and Theresa fairly danced about the floor, as if she had a great mind to whirl her old friend round.

'Well, we will send for Hayes, and see what is to be done.'

Hayes was the estate carpenter, and was one of the most honest and most dilatory of men. When he was hunted up from gratifying a farmer's wife with a bow window, he pronounced that there was a great deal to be done before the room could be fit for a lady, and, to begin with, wanted to take down 'all that there old 'oodwork,' and paper it with one of the genteel, cheerful patterns he had just had sent down to him. The new grate, which might send the warmth into the room instead of up the chimney, was granted; but with as little damage as might be to the blue-and-white Dutch tiles.



CHAPTER XIII

THE mother had consented, though not without a hint to Theresa that she ought to be the person asked to watch over her child. Katie had accepted with trepidation, but with hope and joy ; and as soon as all was ready, Theresa was to go and fetch her.

Quite unexpectedly one ‘blind man’s holiday’ in December the drawing-room door was opened by Roland Tresham.

‘Yes, here’s the bad shilling, Aunt Terry. I’ve wrung out my leave from the Colonel for Christmas, so I thought I’d come this way to have a squint at you and Theresa and the pheasants.’

‘You were afraid the pheasants would miss your attentions,’ said his aunt, laughing.

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‘Poor things—exactly so’—as the greetings were exchanged, a kiss to the elder Theresa, and a squeeze to the hand of the younger, whose blush of confused joy might pass for fire-scorching. Had this arrival been unannounced beforehand for fear it should be hindered? However, all went on so well and naturally in the evening that consciousness died away in pleasure, and Theresa laughed as freely as her aunt over the young man’s fun.

There was the *tête-à-tête* breakfast in the morning, when both were downstairs in preternaturally good time, and discussed the weather as well as how soon the keeper would be hunted up. He was not likely to come late, since he had been distressed at the neglect of the game. ‘Just a temptation in the way of they poachers! I say it is sinful,’ he had observed to Theresa one day, when she had met him disconsolately stalking through the fields.

‘What’s that hammering?’ by and by Roland asked.

‘Oh! didn’t we tell you? Miss St. Lo is having that corner room, the dark wainscotted one—Dame Theresa’s she calls it—set to rights for my sister

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Katie to come and be under young Dr. Vereker.'

'I say! She is not to put your nose out of joint, is she?'

'Oh no! Poor dear Katie, she is not in a state to be of use to anybody. It is only Miss St. Lo's kindness.'

'I remember! She has a spine, I think.'

'Exactly so, and this young doctor has been treating just such a case. And it will be so delightful to have Katie here.'

'As long as she does not put you out! Now look, Theresa, at that picture! I do believe you are as much a St. Lo as any of us! I'm sure you are nearer the Saint than any of the lot. No—now, why should you not be? Didn't one of them go out and settle in the States?'

'Oh! nonsense, Roland. Why, my father's name was Elijah Cicero!'

'Well! if it had been Methuselah Demosthenes, would that hinder him from being the son or grandson of that runaway St. Lo? People did make havoc of good names in Yankee-land! Taillebois into Tallboys, and so on. Now, look up there at Dame Theresa and tell me if you have the face

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to say she isn't your great great grandmother ?'

'Oh ! don't talk of her, or you will set me dreaming of her again.'

'Indeed ! Do you think she would take the trouble to make you dream of her if she was not your granny ? What does she say to you ?'

'Nothing in particular. I wish she did ; she might tell me where to find the rubies.'

'Ah ! depend upon it, what she wants to tell you is that you are the real genuine article, no mistake, and that there's one way to make it all right.'

'Now, Roland, please don't'—at his gesture rather than his words. 'You know it is not right in you — your mother——'

'My mother cannot say one word against your being the very best and jolliest of girls—the only one I ever saw that didn't make a fool of herself, one way or another.'

'That's no praise,' said Theresa, laughing. 'What a ridiculous creature it would be never to make a fool of herself.'

'You know what I mean. No absurdities, shamming being a man, and

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all that, or else having disgusting underhand ways.'

'You know you are just going the way to make me underhand. It is not fair towards your aunt or any of them to talk, or for me to listen to, what they would not like.'

'I'm sure all the world is welcome to hear me.'

At that moment the door opened and in walked Miss St. Lo. Of course they both jumped up to welcome her, and the butler came in after her with cup and plate.

'There, Roland, you see what I have achieved in honour of you,' she said. She had evidently come down unsuspectingly, though no doubt actuated by the sense that it might be better not to leave the two young people to breakfast alone together; and in spite of what Roland had said he did not pursue the subject, but no doubt was glad of the diversion created by the arrival of the post, and presently after by a message that the keeper was waiting for him. Asking his aunt to excuse him, he went off to the interview. Theresa sat on, with

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a high colour, fresher than even her morning face required, as she considered how far truth and honour required her to speak of what had passed. However, she was so far spared the decision by Miss St. Lo saying presently: ‘My dear, I am afraid Roland has been talking nonsense to you.’

‘Oh, Miss St. Lo, what shall I do ? I am of—— No, I can’t say that, but I think he means it. I can’t help it.’

‘Poor child !’ Miss St. Lo said kindly. ‘I know I may depend on you. Tell me if anything of this kind has passed before.’

Theresa related the meeting at the station, and the final words, adding : ‘I hope it was not wrong in me to say nothing about it, but it seemed as if I ought not to make a fuss about it ; and I could not bear to do so either.’

There was a sound of assent, not unkind but perhaps vexed.

‘I wondered if I ought to mention it when I was sent for,’ continued Theresa ; ‘but I hardly could. You were ill, and I thought I had better wait till something showed whether there was any need.’

‘You were right, I think, my dear.

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'There is no reason for me to be displeased with you,' said Miss St. Lo, turning from the table and holding out her arms, so that Theresa could come and receive her kiss, just as the tears began to start. 'I suppose he has not said much more now, naughty boy.'

'N—no,' was half breathed forth, and Miss St. Lo went on : 'I must talk to him, and show him that any way he is putting us all in what he would call a fix.'

'Oh ! Miss St. Lo, don't, pray don't let it upset poor Katie's chance, though you might send me home. My mother would look after her, and, indeed, I don't think you would dislike her. She is very gentle and kind, and though it was not right about me, I believe she half-forgot that I didn't belong, and really did not understand that it was of consequence. She is very good, and did everything to make us good. I could go home and get teaching to do, only do have Katie ! She is a real one !'

'My dear, my dear, don't run on so fast ! Let me think what is to be done. I don't see that persecuting you would be a

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cure for Roland. Indeed, I don't see why—if you were both older—' There she broke off. 'Only I must consider what is fair towards his parents, and talk to him. In short, we had better go about our morning's business, and then I can settle down better to think it over.'

'If you please, ma'am, Mr. Hayes would be glad to speak to you.'





CHAPTER XIV

WHAT Mr. Hayes had to say was that in going over the old woodwork of the wainscotted room, he had come upon one panel that he was certain was really a door. Between the frame and the carving he had detected something movable, and when he tapped on it, there was a hollow sound quite different from what could be made on the rest.

‘Therefore, I should like to know if it is your will that it should be broke open, ma’am; and if it be, I should wish as some of the fammerly was present, for sometimes there’s been a talk, when they secret hiding-places has been found, as how them that opened them hadn’t dealt fair.’

‘I am sure you would never do so,

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Hayes,' returned Miss St. Lo ; 'but I should like very much to see the place opened, for the curiosity of the thing. I wonder whether my nephew is still within call ? Wait a minute for him.'

Roland proved to have been delayed by some of the paraphernalia of sport being fetched, and he came bounding up the outside stair to find his aunt, in her blue spectacles, standing with Theresa in the midst of shavings, glue-pot, and tools, with a background of servants, and Hayes demonstrating that the panel, which was the one with Rebekah upon it, was wider than the rest, and from some shrinking of age, or perhaps nibbling of rats, would move as if it ought to open, but was withheld by a fastening somewhere.

One after another, each felt round the panel and tried to move it, but only to push it just enough to be tantalising, and to make it evident that it was dependent on some spring. Hayes was for cutting it out, or forcing away the obstruction, and Roland's impatience seconded him ; but Miss St. Lo was averse to destructive measures, and was thinking of sending for some skilled workman, when Theresa's

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eyes fell on Rebekah's well, which was represented in the carving as a circular wall with a hole at the top, and a memory of those half-spoken dying words of Dame Theresa rose in her mind and made her put her finger into the cavity, where she felt something of metal which yielded in some degree as she pressed it.

'I do believe this is the spring,' she cried ; and, indeed, a quivering of the panel responded. 'It wants a stronger finger,' she said ; but at her last farewell pressure the spring yielded, the panel shrank back, and on a vigorous push from Roland it fell open, leaving a space, not entirely dark.

'The priest's chamber !' exclaimed Miss St. Lo. 'There was said to be one used when we were Roman Catholics ! Can we get in ?'

It was a very small opening, and no one present except Theresa seemed lithe enough or slight enough to scramble in and encounter two hundred years of dust ; but, of course, she did not hesitate, and, gathering up her skirts, managed to enter, and found herself in a tiny den in the thickness of the wall at the corner,

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lighted in some way from far above ; with a hearth, a table, a chair, and a bedstead, and on the table, smothered in dust, stood a white-looking box. She took it up, and, by feeling rather than sight, discovered that it was of carved ivory, and something hung to it—a little gold key.

‘Oh, oh !’ she cried. ‘No, don’t try to come in yet, Roland. Let me out. Here’s something !’

She was half-choked with dust as Roland dragged her out, and one of the maids flew at her with a duster ; but she diverted the cleansing to the box—a beautifully carved ivory casket as it now appeared to be.

‘Open it ! Oh, you ought to open it !’ cried Theresa, putting the key into Miss St. Lo’s hand ; but the old lady was trembling with agitation, and between that and her imperfect sight, her hand had to be guided to insert the key in the keyhole, and then she could not turn it in the disused lock. It was Roland who did so, but he held back that she might raise the lid.

A yellowed paper lay at the top, and

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beneath in a bed of black velvet lay a red, sparkling cross of dark red stones, placed in the centre of a collar of equally bright gems of the same radiant hue.

‘The rubies of St. Lo,’ burst from three pair of lips ; but all hung back, unwilling as it were to touch the long-lost jewels ; and Roland, who held the paper, read aloud from the writing in a large hand, in ink brown with age :—

‘I have hidden King Henry’s rubies to save them from the profanation of being exchanged for glass imitations to defray gambling debts. I trust that when they are restored to light it will be by the hands of one of my descendants who has never soiled her lips with falsehood.

‘THERESA ST. LO.

‘*June 15th, A.D. 1759.*’

They all stood still for a moment.

‘The well !’ exclaimed Miss St. Lo.
‘That was what she meant.’

‘The truth,’ said Roland, and so saying his bold fingers raised King Henry’s collar from its velvet bed, and threw it over Theresa’s neck.

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‘Oh, don’t, don’t !’ she cried, holding it so as to hinder him from clasping it.

‘No, take it off, I ought not—’

‘By all rights you ought, as I believe,’ said Roland. ‘You believe so too, Aunt Theresa.’

‘Leave the clasp as yet, my dear boy,’ she answered, in a voice very near tears.





CHAPTER XV

WHY that treasure-trove should have altered everything, it might be hard to tell, but it certainly did so. There was superstition enough in the family to believe in their inmost spirits, even while they derided the notion outwardly, that it would never have come about if Theresa had not been a veritable truth-telling St. Lo. The Archdeacon and Mrs. Tresham came to see the rubies, and brought Cora. Moreover, the room being finished, Mrs. St. Lo was invited herself to bring Katie; and even Mrs. Tresham was obliged to allow that she was quiet, unpresuming, and not unladylike.

Though it was understood that nothing really depended on whether Theresa were Lowe or St. Lo, there was an ex-

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amination of her mother as to the parentage of Elijah Cicero. She could tell little except that his father had been a doctor at Albany, and Theresa was an old name in the family. Archdeacon Tresham had, however, made several friends among New England clergy visiting England, and when Roland expressed an intention of rushing off to Albany to hunt out the record, he thought the matter would be safer in the hands of one of these.

In due time arrived the tidings—Elijah Cicero Lowe was the son of Philip and Hoglah Lowe. Philip was the son of Roland S. and Miriam Lowe; and this Roland was, it appeared, the orphan of Henry Roland St. Lo, killed in the battle of Brandywine in 1779, and bred up by his New England mother's relations. The Archdeacon's friend had found old people able to remember the tradition that the little boy, running about his Puritan grandfather's house, belonged to a grand English family, and that the Saint in his name was eschewed as popish. The descent of Elijah Cicero was perfectly traceable, and he was remembered as a

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worthy young man who had obtained education as an engineer, and had come back to marry his girl-love on obtaining a situation on the South American line where he had met his death.

Thus Theresa was undoubtedly of the elder branch, descended from the second instead of the third grandson of the great Dame Theresa. She looked rather terrified on having it explained to her, but was consoled by hearing that family wills and settlements had provided against this contingency of the runaway leaving heirs, by bequeathing the estate to the third son.

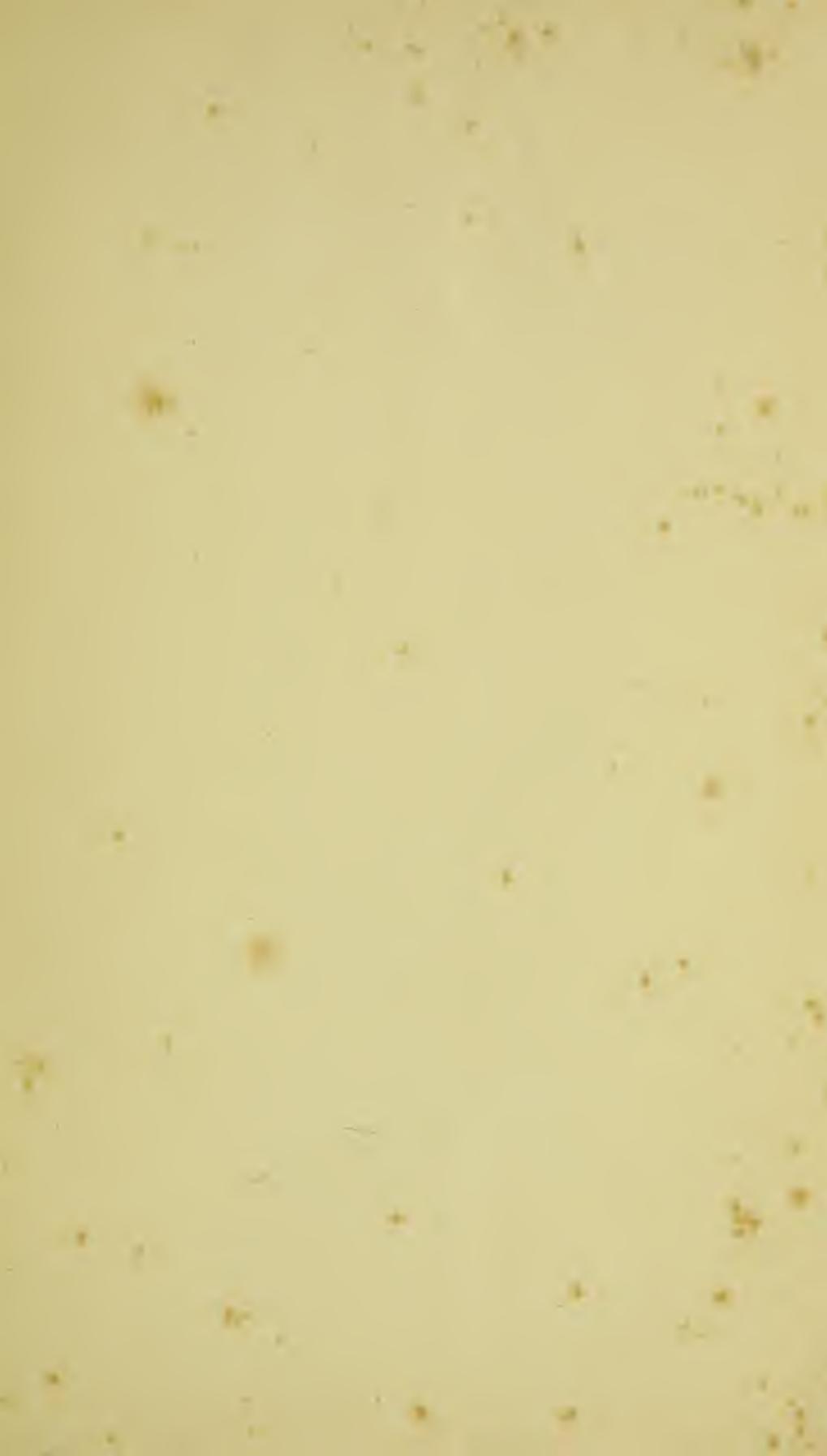
Moreover, Mrs. Tresham fully acquiesced in Theresa St. Lo, penniless as she was, being the fitting match for Roland, who was to take the ancient name. The aunt entreated that this might not be deferred till she was no longer among them. Her eyesight, though not her health, was failing more and more, and she not only wished to keep Theresa with her, but the estate needed a manager, and would give full occupation to the heir, if he took up his abode at the Manor.

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Thus it was that the next Easter Roland and Theresa were made man and wife in the little old church. Katie had, under young Dr. Vereker's management, improved enough to be able to be one of the six delighted bridesmaids, who all wore ruby-trimmed dresses ; while the bride could not but submit to have King Henry's ruby collar and cross clasped upon her neck.

Moreover, as soon as the honeymoon was over, Theresa was taken to London, and there sat for her portrait in the rubies, newly set for the occasion, as King Henry VI. might have worn them, and sparkling with all the lustre of truth.

THE END



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